
 Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS THURSDAY – 27 OCT 2022 			
	International	National	Regional and Local
Events, Opportunities Go to articles	10/27 Day 246 of the Russia invasion 10/27 Ukraine: evacuations intensify in Kherson 10/27 Russia warns: possible attacks on satellites 10/27 China locks down Wuhan, other cities 10/26 IEA: war speeds up clean energy shift 10/26 A dam looms large in battle for Kherson 10/26 India pushback Russia 'dirty bomb' claim 10/26 Russia intensifies propaganda campaign 10/26 Putin monitors nuclear forces strike drills 10/26 Putin fuels fear: repeats 'dirty bomb' claim 10/26 Russia violence in Ukraine strategic, brutal 10/26 Dangerous alliance: Iran sides with Russia 10/26 Exodus of automakers from Russia 10/26 Official: CIA director visited Ukraine 10/26 Serbia's new government inaugurated 10/26 Iran security forces clash w/protesters 10/26 China 'wolf warrior' diplomacy more bite? 10/26 Syria, Russia conducted joint military drills 10/26 Mexico scraps daylight saving time 10/26 Ebola contagion fears grow in Uganda	10/27 NYC hospitalizations rise: wave of viruses 10/27 Police departments face staffing shortages 10/27 Economy grew sluggishly over summer 10/26 DOJ: information to protect right to vote 10/26 Does Constitution guarantee 'right to vote'? 10/26 Signs of a 'triple-demic' 10/26 Young adults heart attacks jumped sharply 10/26 Hurdles to overcome electric school buses 10/26 Diesel stockpile falls to 25day supply 10/26 Another railroad union rejects contract 10/26 Tech's biggest companies economy signals 10/26 Post-lan, retirees wrestle with Florida dream 10/26 Army struggles to find recruits 10/26 US to re-evaluate Saudi relationship 10/26 US sanctions Russia efforts in Moldova 10/26 DOJ investigates Augusta National, USGA 10/26 National Prescription Drug Take Back Day 10/26 Rainbow fentanyl in Halloween candy? 10/26 Sunshine Protection Act: DST to end? 10/25 Hurricane season isn't over yet	10/26 Clash: anti-transgender rally in Tacoma 10/26 More upgrades approved for SEA airport 10/26 VP in Seattle touts electric school buses 10/26 SFD first-ever live fire training in apt. bldg. 10/26 Fired PCSD deputy gets \$400K but not job 10/26 Expect a cooler, wetter winter this year
Cyber, Tech Awareness Go to articles	10/27 Medibank: all customer data exposed 10/26 Anonymous warns FIFA: expel Iran 10/26 Ransomware hits industrial sector hard 10/26 RomCom hackers target Ukraine military 10/26 Kimusky uses 3 Android malware strains 10/26 Notorious 'BestBuy' hacker arraigned in US	10/26 DHS emails: Feds monitoring tweets 10/26 CISA version 2.0 Traffic Light Protocol 10/26 Chemical sector in cybersecurity sprint 10/26 Ransomware victims in highest payments 10/26 Pro-China disinformation: sow US discord 10/26 Tally: 5,000 health data breaches since 2009 10/26 Dormant Colors adware Chrome extensions 10/26 Viral post: 46 days off using 19 days of PTO	10/26 Meta violated WA campaign finance laws
Terrorism, Extremism Go to articles	10/27 Embassies' terror alerts for South Africa 10/27 New Zealand guide: hot to spot a terrorist 10/26 ISIS claims deadly attack in Iran: 15 killed 10/26 Canada police arrest Syria returnees	10/27 Extremists plot to attack energy sites? 10/27 Financial landscape domestic terrorism 10/27 Neo-Nazi community being built in Maine? 10/26 Significant rise domestic terrorism probes 10/26 Michigan governor kidnap plotters guilty 10/25 US kills 2 al-Shabab militants in Somalia	
Suspicious, Unusual Go to articles	10/27 Megalopolis: coastal West Africa 10/26 Methane emissions rising faster than ever	10/27 More human remains found Lake Mead 10/26 Alarm: mystery deaths humpback whales	10/26 Pierce Co. deputies wrangle up alligator 10/26 Group helps find missing dogs in King Co.
Crime, Criminals Go to articles	10/26 Mexico missing students case falls apart	10/26 School shooter left note: 'perfect storm' 10/26 Family tried take gun from school shooter 10/26 Guilty: man drove SUV into parade, killed 6	10/26 Renton organized retail theft: 12 arrests 10/26 Officials: 11 WA drug traffickers charged 10/26 WA 13,000 former inmates eligible to vote

[DISCLAIMER and FAIR USE Notice](#)

Events, Opportunities

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 NYC hospitalizations rise: wave of viruses
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/27/nyregion/nyc-hospitalizations-covid-flu-rsv.html
GIST	<p>Just in time for colder weather and with other respiratory viruses on the rise, the mix of Covid-19 variants is shifting again in New York City in potentially worrying ways.</p> <p>The Omicron variant that accounted for most infections through the summer, BA.5, is now giving way to a variant soup — a mixture of different Omicron subvariants, including BQ.1 and BQ.1.1, which are even more transmissible and better at dodging immunity.</p>

With most testing now done at home, it is hard to get a clear picture of the amount of virus circulating. The city's [official Covid case numbers](#) have been holding steady for two months, at about 2,000 cases reported per day. But hospitalizations have again started to increase. There were about 1,100 people hospitalized with Covid-19 in New York City on Oct. 24, up from 750 in mid-September, [according to state data](#).

The rise in Covid hospitalizations is coinciding with the early arrival of [flu season](#) and a [nationwide surge](#) in RSV, or respiratory syncytial virus, which can cause breathing difficulty in young children and older adults. The result is a brewing [triple threat](#) that is already increasing emergency room visits, and raising concern that hospitals could again be strained this winter.

"There's nothing to be alarmed about right now, but we are laser focused on the dynamics involved," said Gov. Kathy Hochul at a virus briefing on Wednesday.

[Doctors say](#) the pandemic shifted patterns of immunity, by reducing the circulation of regular viruses with masks, and isolation measures. Now that those precautions have been curtailed, familiar viruses are circulating again at high levels, and both the flu and RSV seasons have arrived sooner than expected.

"What we are seeing right now is a combination of many viruses causing a lot of stress on the health care system," said Dr. Jay Varma, the director of the Cornell Center for Pandemic Prevention and Response.

Some children's hospitals are already at capacity in [Massachusetts](#), [Connecticut](#) and [Washington, D.C.](#), as well as in some southern states, due largely to a surge in RSV cases. In New York, Gov. Hochul and Mayor Eric Adams both said Wednesday that hospitals overall were still able to handle their patient loads.

Still, in New York City, visits to emergency departments for children under 5 are now at the highest level since the first Omicron surge last winter. And some pediatric facilities are reporting strain.

On the eastern edge of Queens, [Cohen Children's Medical Center](#) is "absolutely packed" with young patients, with about 250 children being seen in the emergency room each day for the last few weeks, up from 175 to 200 normally, said Dr. Charles Schleien, the chair of pediatrics at the hospital.

As many as 30 to 40 children are being admitted to the Northwell-run hospital every day, mostly with RSV, though there is also an occasional Covid case, he said. Patient areas are so full that some children are spending the night in the emergency room and in the operating room recovery area.

"We were not this busy during the first Omicron surge; we never got to these proportions," he added. "It's been well over 10 years since it's been like this."

So far, in the month of October, Northwell Health's 21 New York hospitals have treated about 300 percent more patients for RSV than they did in September, according to a spokesman.

Much remains unknown about what comes next. "We haven't seen what it's like to have these three viruses circulating at once," said Dr. Denis Nash, an epidemiologist at the City University of New York, who also noted a similar rise in emergency room visits [across age groups](#). While he didn't think Covid cases alone would flood hospitals this winter, the combination of diseases might. "It's also possible there could be co-infections or that one will enhance transmission of another," he said.

Among [the mix of Omicron variants](#) circulating in New York, the one that seems most likely to cause a winter wave is known as BQ.1.1, which has already sent cases soaring in Europe. The variant and its close cousin, BQ.1, now account for an estimated 28 percent of cases in the New York and New Jersey region, up from 11 percent two weeks ago, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

The variants do not appear to be causing more severe illness than BA.5, from which they mutated, but they are more transmissible, said [Maria Van Kerkhove](#), the Covid-19 Technical Lead at the World Health

Organization, in a [public update](#) Wednesday. Reassuringly, vaccines and tests are working as well in response to BQ.1 as with other variants, she said.

Still, as immunity in the population wanes over time, experts are urging people to get booster shots to keep the winter wave as small as possible. While getting boosted does not eliminate the risk of getting Covid, it can reduce the likelihood, and protect against severe disease.

“The boosting is the thing that has to get buckled down,” said Dr. Eric Topol, a cardiologist and the director of the Scripps Research Translational Institute. “As a nation, we are terribly under-boosted.”

In New York, only 7 percent of people eligible for the new booster — which is available to anyone older than 5 — have so far gotten one, Gov. Hochul said on Wednesday. Only 3 percent of children under 5 years old statewide have completed their primary vaccination series, according to the state. Among children 5 to 11 years old, 39 percent have been fully vaccinated, and only 5 percent have gotten at least one booster dose.

Flu shots also are lagging, with 3 million doses so far given across the state, Ms. Hochul said.

Along with being up-to-date with vaccines, it may also be time to reach for that mask again, experts said.

Hearing the same message again may be exhausting — mask, boost, avoid crowded indoor situations, improve ventilation — but with very few mandates left, changing personal behavior is the only real option left for people to tamp transmission down.

“I wish I had something new to say, and that’s really the problem,” Dr. Varma said. “Everything we need people to do are the same things we have been sending messages about since Covid since first emerged.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Economy grew sluggishly over summer
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/27/business/economy/us-economy-gdp.html
GIST	<p>Economic growth rebounded over the summer, the latest government data shows, but slowing consumer spending and a rapidly weakening housing market mean the report will do little to ease fears of a looming recession.</p> <p>Gross domestic product, adjusted for inflation, rose 0.6 percent in the third quarter, a 2.6 percent annual rate of growth, the Commerce Department said Thursday. It was the first increase after two consecutive quarterly contractions.</p> <p>But the third-quarter figures were skewed by the international trade component, which often exhibits big swings from one period to the next. Economists tend to focus on less volatile components, which have showed the recovery steadily losing momentum as the year has progressed.</p> <p>“Ignore the headline number — growth rates are slowing,” said Michael Gapen, chief U.S. economist for Bank of America. “It wouldn’t take much further slowing from here to tip the economy into a recession.”</p> <p>Consumer spending, the bedrock of the U.S. economy, rose just 0.4 percent in the third quarter, down from a 0.5 percent increase in the quarter before, as rapid inflation ate away at households’ spending power. Spending on goods fell for the third consecutive quarter, while spending on services slowed but remained positive.</p> <p>The slowdown in spending will be welcome news for policymakers at the Federal Reserve, who have been trying to cool off consumer demand to tamp down inflation. The central bank has raised interest rates aggressively in recent months, and is expected to announce another big increase at its meeting next week.</p>

But forecasters and investors have become increasingly concerned that the Fed will go too far in its efforts to slow the economy and will end up causing a recession. Consumer spending has continued to increase despite higher interest rates and rising prices, but it is unclear how long that can last.

“‘Borrowed time’ is how I would describe the consumer right now,” said Tim Quinlan, senior economist at Wells Fargo. “Credit card borrowing is up, saving is down, our costs are rising faster than our paychecks are.”

The impact of rising interest rates is clear in the housing market, where home building and sales have both slowed sharply in recent months. The housing sector shrank 7.4 percent in the third quarter, subtracting 1.4 percentage points from the annualized growth rate in overall G.D.P. Businesses also cut investments in commercial and industrial buildings.

The third quarter was in some sense a mirror image of the [first quarter](#), when G.D.P. shrank but consumer spending was strong. In both cases, the swings were driven by international trade. Imports — which don’t count toward domestic production figures — soared early this year as the strong economic recovery led Americans to buy more goods from overseas. Exports slumped as the rest of the world recovered more slowly from the pandemic.

Both trends have begun to reverse as American consumers have shifted more of their spending toward services and away from imported goods, and as foreign demand for American-made goods has recovered. Supply-chain disruptions have added to the volatility, leading to big swings in the data from quarter to quarter.

Few economists expect the strong trade figures from the third quarter to continue, especially because the strong dollar will make American goods less attractive overseas.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Rainbow fentanyl in Halloween candy?
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2022/10/26/rainbow-fentanyl-halloween-candy/10554817002/
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The emergence of rainbow-colored fentanyl has caused panic that the drug is targeting children ahead of Halloween.• But experts largely call the panic overblown, saying parents shouldn't worry about kids getting rainbow fentanyl while trick-or-treating.• There has always been fear of Halloween candy being poisoned, but there's little evidence of it happening. <p>A cautionary tale has developed a new twist this year, as an alarming opioid has become the latest drug feared to be lurking inside trick-or-treat hauls for Halloween.</p> <p>It's been an annual tradition for people to raise concerns of drugs like marijuana edibles or dangerous objects such as needles to be inside candy for the holiday. But this time around has been different, at least to Joel Best, a sociology and criminal justice professor at the University of Delaware who has spent decades studying the scare of tainted Halloween treats.</p> <p>"This year has been especially unusual because you have prominent people pointing to a particular danger, which, of course, is the danger of rainbow fentanyl," Best told USA TODAY. "This has been very strange."</p> <p>Best, who spends every year speaking with the media about Halloween drug hoaxes, said he normally gets interview requests about two weeks before the holiday, but this year he got requests in early September. Rainbow fentanyl has become the latest concern for some Americans since the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration put out a PSA on Aug. 30, warning the colorful opioid is "made to look like candy to children and young people."</p>

Best added that panic ensued when chair of the Republican National Committee Ronna McDaniel said in a September Fox News interview that parents are worried about whether rainbow fentanyl pills are going to be in Halloween baskets. It wasn't long after that [Senate Republicans put out a PSA](#) about the drug and Halloween.

But in all his years of studying, Best has found no evidence of poisoned or fake candy harming or killing children on Halloween, aside from when a Texas father poisoned his son's Halloween candy in the 1970s. He doesn't expect anything to happen this time around.

"This is idiotic," Best said. "Nobody's going to give it away to small children."

'Absolutely ludicrous'

Drug experts agree with Best that it doesn't seem plausible for rainbow fentanyl to be given out as Halloween candy.

Dr. Caleb Banta-Green, director of the University of Washington's Center for Community-Engaged Drug Education, Epidemiology and Research, said that while it's true pastel colors are related to candy, that's as far as it goes. He said the goal of drug dealers is to maximize profit, and that can't be done by giving it out to children for free, or asking them to pay for it when they likely don't have money.

"That's just not your target audience," Banta-Green said. "It just isn't."

In recent weeks, drug busts have resulted in [rainbow fentanyl found in things like Lego containers](#), only adding to concerns that children are being targeted. David Herzberg, associate history professor at the University of Buffalo who studies the history of drug abuse in America, added that opioids are hidden in things like candy boxes and toy containers to make it easier to smuggle.

Plus, he adds that giving rainbow fentanyl to children increases the chances of getting arrested, making it a "colossally stupid business move."

"Distributing your product for free to a bunch of children, who will die, causes the authorities to come after you like no one has ever seen before, to the benefit of your competitors," Herzberg said. "The whole thing is just absolutely ludicrous."

How did fear of drugs on Halloween come about?

Part of Herzberg's research is understanding how street drugs and pharmaceuticals have shaped the country's views and culture. He said the fear of children being poisoned goes as far back as Prohibition in the 1920s, and continued into the 1960s with the rise of heroin.

The reasoning behind the fear is extreme cynicism, and there are some political motivations behind the fear, Herzberg says. The belief is that children and teens are innocent and being preyed on by drug dealers, which favors people who want stronger law enforcement and harsher penalties for drug users. He adds that playing into people's fears leads to support.

"The assumption is that there are some groups of people that just simply wouldn't, or don't have any natural inclination to use drugs," he said. "That's a claim that's made, but it's not true and it's not true today, either."

Best and other drug experts agree there is a slim chance that drugs, or something that looks like drugs, could be passed out on Halloween. If a parent has concerns, Banta-Green suggests allowing kids to have only packaged, branded candy.

"Could something truly weird happened as an outlier? Yeah," he said. "Is that a 1 in a million event? Yeah. I don't live my life around 1 in a million events, and I hope other parents don't either."

HEADLINE	10/26 Mexico scraps daylight saving time
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/mexico-bbb06a9e3f83717f72202589cb8e2626?utm_source=Connatix&utm_medium=HomePage
GIST	<p>MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico’s Senate approved a bill Wednesday to eliminate daylight saving time, putting an end to the practice of changing clocks twice a year.</p> <p>Some cities and towns along the U.S. border can retain daylight saving time, presumably because they are so linked to U.S. cities.</p> <p>The Senate approved the measure on a 59-25 vote, with 12 abstentions. Those who opposed the measure said that less daylight in the afternoon could affect opportunities for children and adults to get exercise.</p> <p>The bill already passed the lower house of Congress and now goes President Andrés Manuel López Obrador to be signed into law.</p> <p>The law would go into effect Sunday, when Mexico is scheduled to turn clocks back for the last time.</p> <p>Previously, Health Secretary Jorge Alcocer had said Mexico should return to “God’s clock,” or standard time, arguing that setting clocks back or forward damages people’s health.</p> <p>The measure would mean darkness falling an hour earlier on summer afternoons.</p> <p>Economists argue that, while the energy savings are minimal, going back to standard time might cause trouble for financial markets in Mexico by putting U.S. East Coast markets so far ahead.</p> <p>And businesses like restaurants that have become accustomed to staying open later may have to close earlier as many crime-wary Mexicans often try to be off the streets after dark.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 Ukraine: evacuations intensify in Kherson
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-zelenskyy-crimea-europe-government-and-politics-990aeb315f9de76ab32ff3674c6c660c?utm_source=homepage&utm_medium=TopNews&utm_campaign=position_02
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Tens of thousands of residents have been evacuated from an area around the strategic city of Kherson as heavy fighting and attacks on power infrastructure continue, Moscow-appointed authorities in southern Ukraine said Thursday.</p> <p>Kherson governor Vladimir Saldo said more than 70,000 residents from the area had been moved. Ukraine has pushed ahead with an offensive to reclaim Kherson that was captured by Russian forces during the first days of the conflict.</p> <p>Members of the regional administration were included in the evacuation, deputy governor Kirill Stremousov said. Monuments were also removed along with the remains of Grigory Potemkin, the Russian general who founded Kherson in the 18th century that had been kept at the city’s St. Catherine’s Church.</p> <p>Fighting has intensified around Kherson, where Ukrainian forces are attacking Russia’s foothold on the west of the Dnieper River that divides the country, as well as in parts of the eastern Donetsk region, while Russian maintained attacks on energy infrastructure ahead of the winter.</p> <p>A Russian drone attack early Thursday hit an energy facility, causing a fire, said Oleksiy Kuleba, governor of the Kyiv region.</p>

“The Russians are using drones and missiles to destroy Ukraine’s energy system ahead of the winter and terrorize civilians,” Kuleba said in televised remarks.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy publicly thanked the country’s power workers for maintaining the electricity supply as authorities have ordered rolling blackouts in many parts of the country and urged households to limit consumption.

“I thank all the workers in the energy sector: our rescuers, repair crews, officials from local government, and private companies who work diligently to maintain our energy system despite all the threats,” Zelenskyy said in his nightly address late Wednesday.

In a likely response to the Russian attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure, the head of the port city of Sevastopol in the Russian-annexed region of Crimea said a power plant just outside the city had suffered minor damage in a drone attack.

Mikhail Razvozhayev said a drone hit a transformer and sparked a fire but did not affect its overall operation and did not interrupt the electricity supply.

Annexed by Russia in 2014, Crimea — a region slightly larger than Sicily — has faced drone attacks and explosions. In a major setback for Russia, on Oct. 8, a powerful truck bomb blew up a section of a strategic bridge linking Crimea to Russia’s mainland.

The war in Ukraine and the resulting energy crisis is likely to cause global demand for fossil fuels to peak or flatten out, according to a report released Thursday by the Paris-based International Energy Agency, largely due to the fall in Russian exports.

“Today’s energy crisis is delivering a shock of unprecedented breadth and complexity,” the IEA said, releasing its annual report, the World Energy Outlook.

The shock to governments, the report said, was forcing advanced economies to accelerate structural changes toward renewable energy sources.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Army struggles to find recruits
SOURCE	https://www.cnbc.com/2022/10/26/us-army-struggles-to-find-recruits-its-needs-to-win-fight-of-future.html
GIST	<p>The U.S. Army is spending more than ever before on technology to replace an aging military infrastructure, from artificial intelligence to new fighting machines moving 1980s tanks off the field of battle. But the Secretary of the U.S. Army says the nation risks falling behind in the race against China if it can’t recruit enough Americans into the service to be trained on how national defense is being remade for future conflicts.</p> <p>“We can develop all of the most high-tech new weapons systems, like we are working on right now, but if we don’t have the kinds of talented motivated individuals to use those weapons systems, we won’t be able to do what we need to do,” U.S. Army Secretary Christine Wormuth said at the CNBC Work Summit on Wednesday.</p> <p>As the gap between the number of job openings and the number of job seekers has remained wide, the tight labor market has made it increasingly difficult for businesses both big and small to find and hire the right workers. That has also impacted the U.S. Army, which as the largest branch of the U.S. military has a current workforce of 466,400.</p> <p>“We’re competing for talent just like all of the folks in industry are, and the job market is hot right now,” Wormuth told CNBC’s Morgan Brennan on Wednesday at the CNBC event. “Wages have gone up a lot, and that’s great for Americans, but it’s making it harder for us in the Army to compete.”</p>

The Army missed its recruitment goal for fiscal 2022 by 25% or 15,000 soldiers, the military service said earlier this month. In July, it also cut its projection for the overall size of its force for this fiscal year by 10,000 and projected that it would likely see another decline in 2023.

While the other branches of the military have also had [trouble recruiting](#), none have been as pronounced as the Army's difficulties, which Wormuth attributed to a variety of factors, including learning losses due to the pandemic and a decline in fitness standards among American youth.

"Only about 23% of kids between 16 and 21 are able to meet our standards, and some of that, frankly, is reflective of the problem that we have in our country with obesity," she said, adding that behavioral health and misconduct are also factors.

A second "really hard problem" cited by Wormuth is what the Army calls "propensity to serve," which is inclination among the population to join the military and serve the country.

"Right now, only 9% of young Americans say that they're interested in joining the military," she said.

Wormuth, who became the first woman to serve as Army Secretary in May, said the service has already started a variety of efforts to boost near-term recruitment. "The Future Soldier Prep Course," which is effectively a pre-boot camp that helps potential recruits raise their test scores and get more physically fit to meet Army standards, is one. This program "shows a lot of promise," Wormuth said.

However, changing the broader propensity of Americans to serve in the military is a challenge that is a much longer-term. One misperception that has to be overcome is about what employment in the military looks like.

"That's going to take time to change, but a lot of it I think is about getting out there and doing a better job of talking to young Americans about what the Army can do for them, and the incredible breadth of skills that they can have access to in the Army," Wormuth said. "We have over 178 military occupational specialties in the Army and it's not just infantry ... we've got data scientists, nurses, doctors, lawyers, paralegals, and I think we've got to do a better job of explaining that to young Americans and their parents."

The Army also needs to change how parents think about the Army and the risks it poses to children.

"We've also got to do a better job of breaking down some of the misperceptions that I think are out there about serving in the military, which are understandable, you know, given that we've been at war, essentially, for the last 20 years," Wormuth said. "In some of the survey data we see, we see parents worrying about, 'if my child joins the military will they automatically have PTSD? Will they be sexually harassed, for example, will they think about committing suicide?'"

She pointed to the fact that the Army has been retaining soldiers "very, very well" and exceeding its retention goals, as part of getting the message out about the Army as a career choice.

"I think what that shows is when people come into the Army, a lot of them want to stay in the Army and they wouldn't want to stay obviously if they were having mental health issues," she said. "So, I think we just need to talk to parents about the realities of what it means to serve in the Army today."

While recent criticisms over the [politicization of the military](#) could be impacting the perception of joining the Army, Wormuth said that when she speaks to soldiers across the globe, "I don't hear a lot from them about politics."

"I think where it's maybe more of an issue is with parents who may be watching the news and kind of seeing how the Army sometimes can be turned into a little bit of a political football, and I think the way that we navigate that is just to continue to stress to young Americans and parents and other kinds of

	<p>influencers that the Army is apolitical and when you join the Army, you swear an oath to the Constitution,” she said.</p> <p>“You don’t swear an oath to either political party. You don’t swear an oath to a specific president. You’re swearing an oath to the Constitution to protect the nation,” she said.</p> <p>Wormuth also weighed in on the current conflict between Russia and Ukraine and the risk of nuclear conflict, saying that it is unlikely Russian president Vladimir Putin follows through on threats to launch a nuclear attack. “There is a lot of concern given how Putin has escalated [the conflict],” Wormuth said. “Certainly there is a concern.” But she said that despite Putin’s threats to use such a weapon against its ex-Soviet neighbor, it is “still an unlikely event.”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/27 Russia warns: possible attacks on satellites
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-warns-of-possible-attacks-on-satellites-used-to-help-ukraine-11666871511
GIST	<p>Russia said it could target commercial satellites if they are used to help Ukraine, the latest in a string of threats aimed at curtailing the military aid sent by the U.S. and other countries, while both NATO and the Kremlin conducted nuclear drills.</p> <p>Konstantin Vorontsov, an official in Moscow’s foreign ministry, told Russian state news agency TASS that if Western satellites are used to aid Kyiv, then they “may be a legitimate target for a retaliation strike.”</p> <p>Though Mr. Vorontsov didn’t name any company, Elon Musk recently pledged that his company SpaceX would continue to fund access for the Ukrainian military to its Starlink satellite internet system. SpaceX didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>On Wednesday, both the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and Russia conducted annual drills of their nuclear forces. Russian President Vladimir Putin watched as a Yars land-based intercontinental ballistic missile was test-fired from the Plesetsk Cosmodrome, a spaceport in the country’s northern Arkhangelsk region, while a Russian nuclear submarine in the Barents Sea launched a Sineva ICBM at the Kura firing range on the far-eastern Kamchatka Peninsula, according to the Kremlin. A Tupolev Tu-95MS long-range aircraft was also used in the missions, carrying out launches of air-based cruise missiles, the Kremlin said.</p> <p>Mr. Putin has warned that the Kremlin would consider all the weapons in its arsenal to defend what it sees as its own territory, including occupied parts of Ukraine that he moved to annex last month. The U.S. has said it has seen no evidence that Russia is preparing to use a nuclear weapon.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Russia has continued to hammer the Ukrainian electric system. Over the past three weeks, strikes from cruise missiles and Iranian-made drones have damaged more than a third of the country’s power system, according to Ukrainian officials. The Ukrainian Armed Forces wrote on Telegram that in the two hours before midnight on Wednesday, 19 Iranian drones were shot down over the Odessa, Mykolaiv and Vinnytsia regions.</p> <p>Russia has used about 400 drones to attack Ukraine, according to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.</p> <p>Overnight, Russian airstrikes hit the Kyiv region and the city of Zaporizhzhia, according to local officials. Ukrainian officials have become increasingly tight-lipped about where Russian attacks are striking and said little about the latest attacks, other than that there were no casualties.</p> <p>“In many cities and regions of Ukraine, emergency blackouts happen, power consumption has to be limited,” Mr. Zelensky said in his nightly address on Wednesday. “No matter what the enemy does, our task is to break its plans and protect Ukraine...Conscious energy consumption is now needed by all Ukrainians.”</p>

The attacks on the power stations are upending the sense of relative normalcy that had prevailed in much of the central and west of the country. In an interview with Ukrainian television this week, Iryna Vereshchuk, a deputy prime minister, asked Ukrainian refugees who had left the country not to return until the spring, to minimize the demands on the power grid during the winter.

“We need to survive the winter,” she said.

In the east of the country, the fighting continued around Bakhmut, which Moscow has been pushing to seize for weeks.

“The craziness of the Russian command is now most visible there,” Mr. Zelensky said of Bakhmut. “Day after day for months, they drive people there to death, concentrate the maximum power of artillery strikes there.”

In the Kherson region, in the country’s occupied south, the Russian-installed governor, Volodymyr Saldo, said that 70,000 civilians had been moved from the west bank of the Dnipro River, as Russian forces prepare to fight Ukrainian troops advancing toward the city.

He also said utilities would continue to work on the west side of the river, and no one would be forced to evacuate. He also played down the possibility, which he and other Russian officials had raised earlier this month, that the Kakhovka dam could be destroyed and flood the region.

“Saldo’s apparent retraction of his own warnings may suggest that he seeks to quell anxiety accompanying the mass movement of civilians and Russian military and occupation elements across the Dnipro in order to preserve his own ability to rule,” the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank, wrote.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 More upgrades approved for SEA airport
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3685117/sea-tac-airport-approves-250-million-for-major-updates/
GIST	<p>Expect more upgrades at Sea-Tac Airport, with the Port of Seattle commission just approving more than \$250 million to advance two key projects.</p> <p>This includes the SEA Gateway Project, a partnership with Alaska Airlines to modernize the 40-year-old ticketing, security, and baggage claim areas in the terminal’s north end.</p> <p>“Passengers already can experience the night and day difference where we offer the most modern facilities, amenities, and sustainability. We are working to bring that experience across the entire airport so passengers can travel with more space, less time in line, and an overall more predictable experience,” said Port of Seattle Commissioner Sam Cho.</p> <p>The project is set up in multiple phases, with the first phase including the addition of 24,500 new square feet designated for employee office and ticket counter space. The second phase will expand the north security checkpoint to an additional lane, with the option to add a seventh if passenger volumes continue to increase.</p> <p>Phase one is expected to be completed next year, and phase two by 2025.</p> <p>A second major project is a remodel of the “S” concourse, which has only had minimal remodels since the 1980s, to include more space for restaurants and shops. These renovations will consist of safety improvements like earthquake resiliency, as well as design improvements, including expanding “environmental efficiencies” and making more space for restaurants and shops.</p> <p>The multi-phase project is expected to be complete by 2031 at the cost of \$1.5 billion.</p>

	<p>“SEA has been one of the fastest growing airports for a decade, mirroring the growth happening in the region,” said Sea-Tac Airport Managing Director Lance Lyttle. “During peak periods, our terminal is stretched to its max, making it a challenge to deliver the efficient, predictable experience that passengers deserve. To hit our efficiency and customer service goals, we need to build up, modernize where we can, and introduce new technology.”</p> <p>Other airport upgrades include funding for upgrading restrooms to include, “brighter lighting, water-saving fixtures, touchless features, larger, more accessible stalls and enhanced art features.”</p>
Return to Top	Visit the airport's projects page for a summary of current improvements.

HEADLINE	10/26 Expect a cooler, wetter winter this year
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3684878/expect-cooler-wetter-winter-year/
GIST	<p>La Nina returns for the third year in a row this winter. Going back to 1950, three consecutive La Ninas occurred only one other time, in the mid-1970s.</p> <p>La Nina is when sea surface temperatures in the Eastern Pacific tropical waters – the waters west of Peru, are cooler than average. Those cooler waters adjust weather patterns in the tropics and are reflected in the mid-latitudes by adjusting the Pacific storm track.</p> <p>La Nina winters tend to have the storm track spend more time at our latitude in the Pacific Northwest versus say, California. As a result, our region usually has a cooler and wetter winter season.</p> <p>A Winter Weather Advisory has already been issued by the National Weather Service (NWS) for the Cascade Mountains between Whatcom and Lewis counties warning of “very difficult travel.”</p> <p>A couple of inches of heavy, wet snow can be found on Snoqualmie Pass Wednesday morning, with State Route 410 closed Wednesday morning because of drivers losing traction near Crystal Village.</p> <p>The latest seasonal winter weather outlook was recently released by the NWS Climate Prediction Center and it reflects that cooler and wetter trend. The outlook stacks the odds in favor of cooler-than-average temperatures and above-average precipitation during the winter season of December through February.</p> <p>La Nina winters often result in a healthy mountain snowpack, and that was the case the past two winters with the snowpack exceeding average depths when they peaked in the spring. In addition, La Nina winters also frequently result in lowland snow across Western Washington and that happened the past two winters as well.</p> <p>La Nina winters can also result in heavy rainfall events and flooding like what happened in Whatcom and Skagit counties last November. Strong damaging wind storms are another potential La Nina by-product.</p> <p>Now is the time to prepare for any of these hazardous weather events before they happen.</p> <p>Visit ready.gov or American Red Cross Preparedness for easy-to-use helpful checklists.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Post-ian, retirees wrestle with Florida dream
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/10/26/hurricane-ian-rebuilding-retirees/
GIST	<p>FORT MYERS BEACH, Fla. — Jennifer Rusk closed her eyes and placed her finger on a map of Florida, landing atop this laid-back island town on the state’s southwest coast.</p> <p>That’s how she ended up here 11 years ago, after her husband persuaded her to move from Virginia to the Sunshine State, where he’d vacationed as a boy. When the couple drove across the Matanzas Pass Bridge,</p>

the arching blue roadway that connects the island to the mainland, they looked at each other and knew: “We said, ‘Oh my God, this is where we’re going to live.’”

Remembering that moment on a recent afternoon, Rusk, 51, couldn’t help but cry. She was standing on the deck of the pale-yellow cottage she and her husband bought [just months after stumbling upon Fort Myers Beach](#). All around her: ruins.

“This is it,” she said of her home, which lost part of its roof and flooded to the second floor, [leaving almost everything inside destroyed](#). “We were going to stay here for retirement and grow old and walk to the beach and walk our dogs and stay with our community.”

For more than a century, millions have flocked to Florida with similar visions to live out their golden years on the beach. The Florida dream exerts a powerful pull: The state consistently ranks among the fastest-growing in the nation. [It is forever under construction](#), with new houses and condos and apartment buildings rising in already-crowded cities. Everyone, it seems, wants a piece of paradise.

But Ian, one of the strongest hurricanes ever to hit the United States, upended the idyllic lives so many had planned for themselves in this stretch of the Sunshine State, often pouring in their life’s savings. As Floridians surveyed the damage from the near-Category 5 storm, [which killed at least 114 people](#), some wrestled with painful questions: Should they stay and rebuild? Could they?

Florida was already in the throes of a housing crisis; the storm [made it worse](#). Damage estimates reach into the tens of billions, and rebuilding won’t come cheap. Even before Ian, Floridians [scrambled to find coverage](#) in the state’s fragile insurance market. Moreover, as climate change makes extreme weather far more common, some question the wisdom of rebuilding on barrier islands and in other delicate coastal areas.

“What we’ve done over the years is party hardy,” said Carol Newcomb, an adjunct professor of environmental humanities at Florida Gulf Coast University in Fort Myers. “We’re in a big hangover now.”

In interviews across the storm-lashed southwest coast, many residents said they were loath to give up the promise of endless summers and eternal sunshine — even as some worried they might not have a choice. They had found something here, where almost everyone is from someplace else, and they didn’t want to lose it. That was true even in neighborhoods where, days after the storm, water and power were still out and mountains of [debris lined the streets](#).

Bob Cofield, 81, rode out the hurricane in a recliner inside his Naples trailer, jacking his feet up as the water rose around him. It was, he said, “one of those inevitable things: You know what’s coming and there’s nothing to do about it, no use getting scared, because I couldn’t go anywhere.”

As the water receded, Cofield, an Alabama native who pocketed real estate brochures when he first glimpsed the city on a motorcycle trip in 1980, took in the destruction. His van inoperable, he walked three miles from the 55-and-up mobile home park to pick up a prescription. Before kind strangers showed up to help him start repairs and find a temporary place to stay, he thought he might have to sleep in the van.

But even when a cousin called, offering to drive down from Hamilton, Ala., with a U-Haul and move him into his late aunt’s house, he refused.

“I’d like to visit. But I wouldn’t want to go up there and live,” Cofield said. “At my age, at 81, they think that I need help, that I need to be taken care of, you know. But I don’t need taken care of right now.”

A few streets over, Lawrence Plesek had set up a folding table in his now-empty trailer, spreading out a photograph, a certificate and a copy of remarks from the renewal of vows he and his wife took on a cruise ship in 2014, their 50th anniversary. He was hoping to dry them out. The couple fled the cold of the Gary, Ind., area in 1969, bringing only a pickup truck, a portable TV, two lawn chairs and a baby crib.

Recalling the day they arrived in Florida, Plesek said, “I didn’t realize that the sky was blue. Where I’m from, the sky was red from the steel mills.” Now he wasn’t sure whether he and his wife would stay in the state where they’d raised their children and spent the majority of their life together. Although their car will be replaced by traveler’s insurance, their trailer was not insured.

“We don’t know what we’re going to do,” Plesek said. He asked for prayer.

Also grappling with uncertainty was Lori Stroup. She and her husband had decided to chase a dream of living in Sanibel in 2020, around the time they turned 50. They left not only their old state of Montana but also their old jobs. In this fresh start, Stroup would do what she had wanted to do all her life: work with animals.

The former executive assistant spotted manatees and tortoises as she walked client’s dogs, savoring the feeling of sun on her face. Her husband, a onetime fishing guide, became her partner in a quickly growing business, Serenity Sitters of Sanibel.

Ian brought that blissful new life to an abrupt end. Like much of Sanibel, the ground-level house the Stroups bought last year is uninhabitable. Their company is on hold. The couple has been staying in a friend’s mobile home, waiting to find out whether they can afford to fix their home. In the meantime, they still have to pay the mortgage.

“We thought my business was going to take off and we’d really be able to have a life there,” Stroup said. “I guess I’m just hoping that this was a freak 100-year hurricane.”

For others in hard-hit areas, Ian was a sign to get out. Newcomb, the university professor, has lived in Fort Myers for more than 30 years — almost her entire adult life. She teaches sustainability, and she’s been thinking about leaving Southwest Florida for years. She was always lulled into staying. But no more.

Days after the storm struck, Newcomb made up her mind: She would sell her house and head north. She rented a place near her daughter’s in St. Augustine, about 250 miles away on the state’s Atlantic side.

“I am out of here,” she said. “It is paradise lost.”

To Newcomb, rebuilding would look something like Babcock Ranch, a community of 5,000 northeast of Fort Myers. She was a consultant on the development designed to accommodate the state’s climate — including its powerful storms. Babcock Ranch garnered a rush of publicity after residents emerged from Hurricane Ian to find that missing shingles and toppled trees made up most of the damage. The homes never lost power.

The community, Newcomb said, “really has the right ingredients.” It is 30 miles inland, entirely solar-powered, all concrete and new construction. Half the land is set aside for green spaces.

It is, in many ways, a far cry from what people loved about a place like Fort Myers Beach: charming old cottages lined up right along the sand. What they loved about it, though, was also what made it vulnerable to Ian.

“Everything that we loved about it is now gone,” said Tonya Reed, traipsing through a landscape of sand and debris to the office where she had managed vacation rentals. “Everything that’s still standing, I don’t care that much about, and that’s all that it’s going to be now from now on. The charm is gone. Fort Myers Beach is gone.”

Between talking to contractors and waiting for a structural engineer to arrive and cleaning up the heaps outside her little yellow house, Rusk allowed herself to imagine the future of the place she had come to love. In 11 years, she had become passionate about the area’s marine life, teaching residents and tourists about conservationism. She and her husband had hosted family trips and befriended their neighbors. She did not want to leave.

	<p>“Things are going to look very different,” she said. “The face of Fort Myers Beach is going to change very drastically. But it doesn’t need to turn into other places.”</p> <p>It was a blank canvas, she said, ready to be painted. She listed off new dreams for the town: Maybe it could be made greener, more environmentally friendly, more sustainable. She beamed just at the thought of it.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/25 Hurricane season isn’t over yet
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/10/25/tropical-atlantic-hurricane-season-disturbances/
GIST	<p>Atlantic hurricane season historically peaks in September, but October can be a sneakily perilous month. Despite a quiet few weeks since the demise of Ian in late September, the season is far from over — and meteorologists are tracking three disturbances with varying potential for development.</p> <p>One is near Bermuda and flirted with becoming a brief tropical depression. Another is centered well to its south, and a third — perhaps the most intriguing at this point — could enter the eastern Caribbean this weekend.</p> <p>The season to date has featured 11 named storms, including five hurricanes. Despite the flurry of storminess, the season has technically been below average for activity. That is according to a metric called ACE, or Accumulated Cyclone Energy, which is meant to quantify how much cumulative energy storms expend on their strong winds.</p> <p>At present, the season has racked up 84.1 ACE units, meaning we’re still about 25 percent below what is average. Roughly half of this season’s ACE was churned through by just two storms — Ian and Fiona — which both spent time as Category 4 hurricanes roaming the ocean basin.</p> <p>Officially, hurricane season does not end until Nov. 30, and the trio of systems discussed below exemplifies why it is too early to stop monitoring the tropical Atlantic.</p> <p>System No. 1: Swirl near Bermuda</p> <p>The first area to watch is a small swirl of clouds just north-northwest of Bermuda. Initially, it sprouted a couple of showers and thunderstorms, but most have disintegrated. It was once believed that any showers and thunderstorms that formed near its center would vertically stretch the axis of near-surface spin and allow a tropical depression to brew. Now, however, disruptive wind shear, or a change of wind speed and/or direction with height, is working against it.</p> <p>In the case of a mature hurricane, wind shear can play a game of atmospheric tug of war that knocks a storm off-kilter. For a storm still working to develop, wind shear is like aiming a leaf blower at a spinning top.</p> <p>As such, the Bermuda swirl is unlikely to become better organized. The island may experience an isolated shower or some breezy winds Tuesday, but otherwise, the system is working north-northwest and is likely to be shredded by strengthening upper-level winds in the next day or two.</p> <p>System No. 2: Southwestern Atlantic</p> <p>A low-pressure system is expected to form midway between Hispaniola and Bermuda sometime Thursday or Friday. Initially, it should be just a broad, open wave of low pressure with a scattering of thunderstorms embedded within it, but it could consolidate. If that does happen, it probably would occur near or west of Bermuda before the system swings east after getting caught up in the path of an approaching cold front. The key time frame to watch would be Saturday through Monday.</p> <p>The National Hurricane Center estimates a 30 percent chance of eventual development.</p>

System No. 3: Eastern Caribbean

This system — a disorganized group of showers and thunderstorms about 700 miles east of the Windward Islands — is potentially of greatest concern, but whether a threat will materialize is uncertain.

Some weather models hint that some of the showers and storms will skim along the northeastern coast of South America before emerging in the extreme southeastern Caribbean. If they do so, they would encounter an environment favorable for intensification, with gentle upper-level winds and exceptionally warm ocean waters. However, other models suggest the thunderstorms are more likely to move over land in northern South America — where they would not be able to organize themselves into something more potent.

The National Hurricane Center estimates a 20 percent chance of development in the next five days, but that chance could grow. The system will not even move into the southeastern Caribbean until the late-Thursday or early-Friday time frame.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 DOJ: information to protect right to vote
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/infrastructure-security/justice-department-releases-information-on-efforts-to-protect-the-right-to-vote-prosecute-election-fraud-and-secure-elections/
GIST	<p>Consistent with longstanding Justice Department practices and procedures, the department today provided information about its efforts, through the Civil Rights Division, Criminal Division, and National Security Division, to ensure that all qualified voters have the opportunity to cast their ballots and have their votes counted free of discrimination, intimidation, or fraud in the election process, and to ensure that our elections are secure and free from foreign malign influence and interference.</p> <p>Civil Rights Division</p> <p>The department's Civil Rights Division is responsible for ensuring compliance with the civil provisions of federal statutes that protect the right to vote, and with the criminal provisions of federal statutes prohibiting discriminatory interference with that right.</p> <p>The Civil Rights Division's Voting Section enforces the civil provisions of a wide range of federal statutes that protect the right to vote including: the Voting Rights Act; the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act; the National Voter Registration Act; the Help America Vote Act; and the Civil Rights Acts. Among other things, collectively, these laws:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prohibit election practices that have either a discriminatory purpose or a discriminatory result on account of race, color, or language minority status.• Prohibit intimidation of voters.• Allow voters who need assistance in voting because of disability or inability to read or write to receive assistance from a person of their choice (other than agents of their employer or union).• Require minority language election materials and assistance in certain jurisdictions.• Require accessible voting systems for voters with disabilities.• Require that provisional ballots be offered to voters who assert they are registered and eligible to vote in the jurisdiction, but whose names do not appear on poll books.• Require states to provide for absentee voting for uniformed service members serving away from home, their family members also away from home due to that service, and U.S. citizens living abroad.• Require covered States to offer the opportunity to register to vote through offices that provide driver licenses, public assistance, and disability services, as well as through the mail; and to take steps regarding maintaining voter registration lists. <p>The Civil Rights Division's Disability Rights Section enforces the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which prohibits discrimination in voting based on disability. The ADA applies to all aspects of voting, including voter registration, selection and accessibility of voting facilities, and the casting of ballots on Election Day or during early voting, whether in-person or absentee.</p>

The Civil Rights Division's Criminal Section enforces federal criminal statutes that prohibit voter intimidation and voter suppression based on race, color, national origin, or religion.

On Election Day, the Civil Rights Division will implement a comprehensive program to help ensure the right to vote that will include the following:

- The Civil Rights Division will conduct monitoring in the field to observe compliance with the federal voting rights statutes.
- Civil Rights Division attorneys in the Voting, Disability Rights, and Criminal Sections in Washington, D.C., will be ready to receive complaints of potential violations of any of the statutes the Civil Rights Division enforces. Attorneys in the division will coordinate within the department and will take appropriate action concerning these complaints before, during, and after Election Day.
- Individuals with complaints related to possible violations of the federal voting rights laws can call the Justice Department's toll-free telephone line at: 800-253-3931, and also can submit complaints through a link on the department's website at <https://civilrights.justice.gov/>.
- Individuals with questions or complaints related to the ADA may call the Justice Department's toll-free ADA information line at 800-514-0301 or 833-610-1264 (TTY), or submit a complaint through a link on the department's ADA website at ada.gov.

Complaints related to violence, threats of violence, or intimidation at a polling place should always be reported immediately to local authorities by calling 911. They should also be reported to the department after local authorities are contacted.

Criminal Division and the Department's 94 U.S. Attorneys' Offices

The department's Criminal Division oversees the enforcement of federal laws that criminalize certain forms of election fraud and vindicate the integrity of the federal election process.

The Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section and the department's 94 U.S. Attorneys' Offices are responsible for enforcing the federal criminal laws that prohibit various forms of election fraud, such as destruction of ballots, vote-buying, multiple voting, submission of fraudulent ballots or registrations, alteration of votes, and malfeasance by postal or election officials and employees. The Criminal Division and the U.S. Attorneys' Offices are also responsible for enforcing federal criminal law prohibiting unlawful threats of violence against election workers, and prohibiting voter intimidation and voter suppression for reasons other than race, color, national origin, or religion (as noted above, voter intimidation and voter suppression that has a basis in race, color, national origin, or religion is addressed by the Civil Rights Division).

The U.S. Attorneys' Offices around the country designate Assistant U.S. Attorneys who serve as District Election Officers (DEOs) in the respective districts. DEOs are responsible for overseeing potential election-crime matters in their districts, and for coordinating with the department's election-crime experts in Washington, D.C.

From now through Election Day, the U.S. Attorneys' Offices will work with specially-trained FBI personnel in each district to ensure that complaints from the public involving possible election fraud are handled appropriately. Specifically:

- In consultation with federal prosecutors at the Public Integrity Section in Washington, D.C., the DEOs in U.S. Attorneys' Offices, FBI officials at headquarters in Washington, D.C., and FBI special agents serving as Election Crime Coordinators in the FBI's 56 field offices will be on duty while polls are open to receive complaints from the public.
- Election-crime complaints should be directed to the local U.S. Attorneys' Offices or the local FBI field office. A list of U.S. Attorneys' Offices and their telephone numbers can be found at <http://www.justice.gov/usao/districts/>. A list of FBI field offices and accompanying telephone numbers can be found at www.fbi.gov/contact-us.
- Public Integrity Section prosecutors are available to consult and coordinate with the U.S. Attorneys' Offices and the FBI regarding the handling of election-crime allegations.

All complaints related to violence, threats of violence, or intimidation at a polling place should be reported first to local police authorities by calling 911. After alerting local law enforcement to such emergencies by calling 911, the public should contact the Justice Department.

National Security Division

The department's National Security Division supervises the investigation and prosecution of cases affecting or relating to national security, including any cases involving foreign malign influence and interference in elections or violent extremist threats to elections. In this context:

- The National Security Division's Counterintelligence and Export Control Section oversees matters involving a range of malign influence activities that foreign governments may attempt, including computer hacking of election or campaign infrastructure; covert information operations (e.g., to promulgate disinformation through social media); covert efforts to support or denigrate political candidates or organizations; and other covert influence operations that might violate various criminal statutes.
- The National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section oversees matters involving international and domestic terrorism and supports law enforcement in preventing any acts of terrorism that impact Americans, including any violent extremism that might threaten election security.

As in past elections, the National Security Division will work closely with counterparts at the FBI and our U.S. Attorneys' Offices to protect our nation's elections from any national security threats. Attorneys from both National Security Division sections will be partnered with FBI Headquarters components to provide support to U.S. Attorneys' Offices and FBI Field Offices to counter any such threats. The Department of Homeland Security also plays its own important role in safeguarding critical election infrastructure from cyber and other threats.

Complaints related to violence, threats of violence, or intimidation at a polling place should always be reported immediately to local authorities by calling 911 and, after local authorities are contacted, then should also be reported to the department.

Protecting the right to vote, prosecuting election fraud, and securing our elections are all essential to maintaining the confidence of all Americans in our democratic system of government. The department encourages anyone with information regarding concerns in these subject areas to contact the appropriate authorities.

For more information about the department's work to ensure compliance with federal civil and criminal laws related to voting, please visit [Voting | Department of Justice](#) and [Election Crimes Branch | Department of Justice](#).

[Return to Top](#)

[Read more at the Justice Department](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 National Prescription Drug Take Back Day
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/law-enforcement-and-public-safety/dea-gears-up-for-national-prescription-drug-take-back-day/
GIST	<p>The Drug Enforcement Administration will host its 23rd National Prescription Drug Take Back Day on Saturday, October 29, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. This event offers anonymous disposal of unneeded medications at more than 4,000 local drop-off locations nationwide.</p> <p>For more than a decade, DEA's National Prescription Drug Take Back Day has provided an easy, no-cost opportunity to dispose of medicines stored in the home that are susceptible to misuse and theft.</p> <p>Opioid misuse remains at epidemic levels in the United States. According to a report published by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), a majority of people who misused a prescription medication obtained the medicine from a family member or friend.</p>

	<p>“I encourage everyone across the country to dispose of unneeded medications to help keep our communities safe and healthy,” said DEA Administrator Anne Milgram. “The Take Back campaign is part of DEA’s continued efforts to combat the drug poisoning epidemic and protect the safety and health of communities across the United States.”</p> <p>The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that in the United States, approximately 107,622 people died as the result of a drug poisoning last year. This means that someone in the United States is dying of a drug poisoning every five minutes.</p> <p>On Saturday, October 29, 2022, DEA and its partners will collect tablets, capsules, patches, and other forms of prescription drugs. Collection sites will not accept syringes, sharps, and illicit drugs. Liquid products, such as cough syrup, should remain sealed in their original container. The cap must be tightly sealed to prevent leakage. The event will also continue to accept vaping devices and cartridges provided lithium batteries are removed.</p> <p>A location finder and partner toolbox are available at www.DEATakeBack.com for easy reference to nearby collection sites. Beyond DEA’s Take Back Day, there are also opportunities to regularly and safely dispose of unneeded medications at close to 15,000 pharmacies, hospitals, and businesses prescription disposal locations. In addition, many police departments provide year-round drop boxes.</p>
Return to Top	Read more at DEA

HEADLINE	10/26 Diesel stockpile falls to 25day supply
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/26/us-diesel-stockpile-falls-lowest-level-08-winter-l/
GIST	<p>The U.S. has only a 25-day supply of diesel fuel, lowest since 2008, just as demand is surging ahead of winter.</p> <p>The report by the Energy Information Administration is raising concerns that trucking and home heating costs will continue to rise this winter, cutting deeper into household budgets and further straining supply chains.</p> <p>The national average price of diesel as of Wednesday was at \$5.31 a gallon — \$1.70 more than last year.</p> <p>White House National Economic Council Director Brian Deese told Bloomberg TV Wednesday that diesel inventories are “unacceptably low” and “all options are on the table” to increase supply and lower prices. But it’s not clear what steps the administration can take.</p> <p>The Northeast Home Heating Oil Reserve, a component of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, has one million barrels of diesel in case of a disruption in supplies.</p> <p>“We have looked very carefully at being prepared to deploy as and when necessary,” Mr. Deese said.</p> <p>Republicans in Congress are warning of economic consequences and blaming the administration for short-sighted energy policies.</p> <p>“The day the trucks stop running is the day the economy crashes,” tweeted Rep. Troy Nehls, Texas Republican. “And it’s not getting better anytime soon.”</p> <p>Rep. Andy Biggs, Arizona Republican, said the shortage is a result of “Biden’s assault on fossil fuels.”</p> <p>“This crucial fuel is used for transporting goods, farming, and military vehicles,” Mr. Biggs wrote on Twitter. “He is putting America Last and bringing us back to the stone age.”</p>

Craig Fuller, a supply-chain media executive, said diesel is the second-highest cost for U.S. trucking companies, behind labor.

“This is horrible news heading into one of the worst freight markets in years,” Mr. Fuller tweeted.

The administration has tapped into the SPR to blunt rising gas prices in an election year, despite concerns that the move could leave the U.S. with fewer options in case of another national emergency.

Another possibility is for the U.S. to restrict diesel fuel exports. Petroleum industry groups warned against that step earlier this month.

“Banning or limiting the export of refined products would likely decrease inventory levels, reduce domestic refining capacity, put upward pressure on consumer fuel prices and alienate U.S. allies during a time of war,” the American Petroleum Institute and the American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers wrote in a joint letter.

Diesel fuel is relatively dirty, an aspect that Vice President Kamala Harris noted this week as she hailed a \$5 billion administration initiative to convert school buses across the nation to mostly electric vehicles.

“75% of our school buses are fueled by diesel fuel, which contributes to very serious conditions that are about health and about the ability to learn,” Ms. Harris said.

Diesel stockpiles in New England, where residents rely more on the fuel in winter for home heating, are about one-third of normal levels for this time of year.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Iran security forces clash w/protesters
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/26/iran-protests-mahsa-amini-grave-crackdown-kurdish-death
GIST	<p>Iranian security forces have clashed with protesters who had gathered in their thousands in Mahsa Amini’s home town to mark 40 days since her death, with reports that shots were fired.</p> <p>“Security forces have shot teargas and opened fire on people in Zindan Square, Saqqez city,” Hengaw, a Norway-based group that monitors rights violations in Iran’s Kurdish regions, tweeted without specifying whether there were any dead or wounded. It said more than 50 civilians were injured by direct fire in cities across the region.</p> <p>Witnesses confirmed shots were fired, while the Iranian government said security forces had been forced to respond to riots. Iran later tried to block internet access in the region.</p> <p>The 40th day after a death traditionally marks the end of mourning, and appeals had gone out for protesters to take to the streets, a call that was answered in Tehran, Isfahan and Mashhad. Reports of teargas being fired in Iran were backed by video evidence.</p> <p>Despite a ban by the security forces, the biggest gathering was in Amini’s home town of Saqqez in the western Kurdistan province. Amini died on 16 September, three days after she was arrested by the morality police for being dressed inappropriately. An official inquiry said she collapsed due to a pre-existing condition, an explanation rejected by Amini’s family, who have been prevented from choosing any doctors on the medical examination panel.</p> <p>Her death sparked unexpected protests involving many students and schoolgirls, removing and burning their headscarves and confronting security forces on the street.</p> <p>Mourners headed to Amini’s gravesite on Wednesday morning even though the security services had warned her family not to hold the ceremony, threatening that “they should worry for their son’s life”, according to activists. As many as 10,000 mourners attended, arriving on foot as well as in cars and on motorcycles.</p>

“Death to the dictator,” mourners chanted at the Aichi cemetery outside Saqqez, before many were seen heading to the governor’s office in the city centre. Iran’s Fars news agency said about 2,000 people gathered in Saqqez city and chanted “woman, life, freedom”.

Images shared by Hengaw showed the heavy presence of security forces overnight in Saqqez. They had reportedly shut entrances to the city and closed roads leading to Aichi cemetery and Amini’s graveside.

In one video the group chant: “Kurdistan, Kurdistan, the graveyard of fascists.” But they also address claims that the protests are part of a Kurdish separatist movement by saying there is solidarity in Tehran and Kurdistan.

The shootings appear to have happened when a smaller group marched to the governor’s office in Saqqez.

The protests extended far beyond Iranian Kurdistan to many cities around the country, with one group of students at Amirkabir University in Tehran chanting at the police: “We are free women, you are the whores.” Large groups gathered at the universities of Isfahan and Ahvaz, and at Azad University and Shahid Beheshti University in Tehran, while a giant poster of Iran’s revolutionary leader was burned down at Mashhad.

Hengaw said strikes by workers were under way in Saqqez as well as Divandarreh, Marivan, Kamyaran and Sanandaj, and in Javanrud and Ravansar in the western province of Kermanshah.

Kurdistan governor Esmail Zarei-Kousha accused Iran’s foes of being behind the unrest.

“The enemy and its media ... are trying to use the 40-day anniversary of Mahsa Amini’s death as a pretext to cause new tensions but fortunately the situation in the province is completely stable,” he said, quoted by state news agency IRNA.

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, the British-Iranian dual national held in jail in Tehran for five years, speaking in London at a Thomson Reuters conference, fought back tears as she praised the new internet generation on the streets of Iran “risking their lives and fighting for freedom”.

Apologising as she wiped away tears, she said the response to Amini’s death “sparked rays of hope for all of us, not just in Iran but across the globe, that hopefully justice will prevail”. She said Amini’s name had become the code for freedom.

Zaghari-Ratcliffe added that “the new, very different generation know a lot about freedom, they want a more transparent government, better lifestyle, freedom of speech and decent jobs, they know about rights and they are prepared to take risks to get it”. She said this generation had learned about freedom from the internet, TikTok and satellite TV, and would not back down.

She said: “Today the regime is not only fighting to maintain its power, but for its survival. The foundation of the Islamic Republic is based on terror. They survive in a system of repression. They have no limits to their brutality and oppression. The security forces arrest protesters and put them in solitary confinement, which is one of the most brutal yet less physical violent forms of torture.”

The west, she said, had a responsibility to ensure that Iranian state censorship was overcome, and to hold the Iranian regime to account.

The regime will be hoping the 40th day protests are a last gasp for the demonstrations, rather than a moment they reignite. Iranian judicial officials announced this week that they would put more than 600 people on trial for their role in the protests, including 315 in Tehran, 201 in the neighbouring Alborz province and 105 in the south-western province of Khuzestan.

	<p>Oslo-based group Iran Human Rights said the security forces' crackdown on the Amini protests had killed a total of at least 141 demonstrators, in an updated death toll on Tuesday.</p> <p>The US on Wednesday placed more than a dozen Iranian officials on its sanctions blacklist for the crackdown. The White House later said it was "concerned that Moscow may be advising Iran on best practices to manage protests, drawing on ... extensive experience in suppressing" opponents.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 Day 246 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/27/russia-ukraine-war-at-a-glance-what-we-know-on-day-246-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Russian president, Vladimir Putin, is said to have monitored drills of the country's strategic nuclear forces involving multiple launches of ballistic and cruise missiles. The defence minister, Sergei Shoigu, reported to Putin that the exercise was intended to simulate a "massive nuclear strike" by Russia in retaliation for a nuclear attack. The drills were seen as a continuation of Moscow's unfounded dirty bomb claims. • The prospect of bitter urban fighting for Kherson came closer as Russian-installed authorities told residents to move to the east bank of the Dnieper river. Oleksiy Arestovych, an adviser to the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said there was no sign Russian forces were preparing to abandon the city. • Ukraine's counter-offensive against Russian forces in Kherson was proving more difficult than it was in the north-east because of wet weather and the terrain, Ukraine's defence minister said. • About 70,000 civilians had left their homes in Kherson province in the space of a week, a Moscow-installed official, Vladimir Saldo, told a regional TV channel. • Ukraine is advising refugees living abroad not to return until the spring amid mounting fears over whether the country's damaged energy infrastructure can handle winter. With a third of the country's energy sector compromised, Ukraine's deputy prime minister, Iryna Vereshchuk, warned: "The networks will not cope ... You see what Russia is doing. We need to survive the winter." • About 1,000 bodies – including civilians and children – have been exhumed in the recently liberated Kharkiv region, media reports say. This includes the 447 bodies found at the mass burial site in Izium. • Ukraine's defence minister, Oleksiy Reznikov, said he did not believe Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, would use nuclear weapons. Putin has said repeatedly that Russia has the right to defend itself using any weapons in its arsenal, which includes the world's largest nuclear stockpile. • Russia's defence minister, Sergei Shoigu, held a phone call with his Indian and Chinese counterparts and raised Russia's purported concerns about the possible use of a "dirty bomb" by Ukraine, Shoigu's ministry said. It followed calls between Shoigu and Nato defence ministers on the topic. There is no evidence to support Russia's "dirty bomb" claim. • The UN culture agency, Unesco, has said it is using before-and-after satellite imagery to monitor the cultural destruction inflicted by Russia's war in Ukraine, and would make its tracking platform public soon. Unesco said it had verified damage to 207 cultural sites including religious sites, museums, buildings of historical and/or artistic interest, monuments and libraries. • The United Nations' aid chief, Martin Griffiths, said he was "relatively optimistic" that a UN-brokered deal allowing Black Sea grain exports from Ukraine would be extended beyond mid-November. Griffiths travelled to Moscow with senior UN trade official Rebeca Grynspan this month for discussions with Russian officials on the deal, which also aims to facilitate exports of Russian grain and fertiliser to global markets. • The remains of a US citizen killed in fighting in Ukraine were released to Ukrainian authorities and would soon be returned to the person's family, a US state department spokesperson said. • The European Union could introduce a gas price cap this winter to limit price spikes if countries give Brussels a mandate to propose the measure. • EU regulators are considering extending easier state-aid rules that allow governments to support businesses affected by the war in Ukraine to the end of 2023, and with bigger amounts permitted,

	the competition chief, Margrethe Vestager, has said. The more flexible rules were introduced in March and revised in July.
Return to Top	
HEADLINE	10/27 China locks down Wuhan, other cities
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/27/china-locks-down-part-of-wuhan-nearly-three-years-after-first-covid-case-emerged
GIST	<p>Chinese cities from Wuhan in central China to Xining in the north-west are doubling down on Covid-19 curbs, sealing up buildings, locking down districts and throwing millions into distress in a scramble to halt widening outbreaks.</p> <p>China on Thursday reported a third straight day of more than 1,000 new Covid cases nationwide, a modest tally compared with the tens of thousands a day that sent Shanghai into a full-blown lockdown earlier this year but enough to trigger more curbs and restrictions across the country.</p> <p>Wuhan, site of the world's first Covid-19 outbreak in late 2019, reported about 20 to 25 new infections a day this week. The city has registered 240 cases over the past 14 days. Local authorities ordered more than 800,000 people in one district to stay at home until 30 October.</p> <p>Wuhan also suspended the sale of pork in parts of the city, according to images and posts on social media, after authorities said one Covid case had been linked to the local pork supply chain.</p> <p>Guangzhou, China's fourth-biggest city by economic output and the provincial capital of Guangdong, on Thursday sealed up more streets and neighbourhoods and kept people in their homes as new areas were deemed high-risk in a Covid resurgence that has persisted into its fourth week.</p> <p>In Xining, capital of Qinghai province, social media posts told of food shortages and price inflation for essential goods as health authorities in the city of 2.5 million people raced to contain a Covid rebound after the week-long National Day holiday in early October.</p> <p>"To reduce the risk of transmission, some vegetable and fruit stores have been closed and put under quarantine," said a Xining government official on Wednesday.</p> <p>China's coronavirus case load has remained small by global standards, but its ultra-strict containment measures against the highly transmissible Omicron variant have weighed heavily on the world's second-largest economy and rattled financial markets.</p> <p>Other large cities across China including Datong and Xi'an have implemented new curbs this week to rein in local outbreaks.</p> <p>In Beijing, the Universal Resort theme park was shut on Wednesday after at least one visitor tested positive for coronavirus.</p> <p>In Zhengzhou, there was an outbreak at a factory that employs about 300,000 people and is known as the largest producer of iPhones in the world.</p> <p>Foxconn Technology Group, which runs the facility, acknowledged the flare-up on Wednesday but said "operation and production ... is relatively stable".</p> <p>"Health and safety measures for employees (are) being maintained," the Taiwanese electronics maker said, adding that it was "providing the necessary guarantees for livelihoods, including material supplies, psychological comfort and responsive feedback".</p> <p>The company did not specify how many staff were affected by the outbreak but said it was a "small number" and that unsubstantiated online rumours of tens of thousands of infections were "patently false".</p>

	<p>“At present, the epidemic prevention work in Zhengzhou is progressing steadily, and the impact ... is controllable,” the statement said.</p> <p>China has repeatedly vowed to stick to its zero-tolerance response to Covid-19 and implement what the authorities say are necessary measures to contain the virus.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 DOJ investigates Augusta National, USGA
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/augusta-national-investigation-masters-liv-golf-doj-usga-11666792047?mod=hp_lead_pos10
GIST	<p>The Justice Department’s antitrust investigation into professional golf includes the powerhouse bodies Augusta National Golf Club and the United States Golf Association, in addition to the PGA Tour, according to people familiar with the matter.</p> <p>The PGA Tour is battling the upstart, Saudi-backed LIV Golf’s bid to establish a rival golf tour that has already lured away a number of star players. The DOJ antitrust division’s scrutiny of the PGA Tour was first reported by The Wall Street Journal in July. Players’ agents have received inquiries about the Tour’s bylaws as they pertain to players’ participation in non-PGA Tour events, and the Tour’s actions relating to LIV Golf.</p> <p>The DOJ investigation, however, is wider than was previously known, extending to some of the other most important bodies in golf. People familiar with the matter said those groups include Augusta National, which oversees the iconic Masters tournament each spring. The famously secretive club has produced documents for the Justice Department probe, these people said.</p> <p>A spokeswoman for Augusta National declined to comment. Craig Waldman, a lawyer at Jones Day representing Augusta National in the matter, had no comment.</p> <p>The USGA, which governs the sport in the U.S. and oversees the U.S. Open, is also a subject of the investigation, a USGA spokeswoman confirmed. The USGA intends to fully comply with any and all requests, the spokeswoman said.</p> <p>The PGA of America, which is distinct from the PGA Tour and runs the PGA Championship, is another body whose actions are being examined as part of the probe, people familiar with the matter said. The PGA of America also declined to comment.</p> <p>A Justice Department spokeswoman declined to comment.</p> <p>The Justice Department’s interest is only one of the legal battles surrounding the warring golf circuits, as other fights have also drawn in the most significant institutions in the sport’s establishment.</p> <p>LIV Golf is pursuing an antitrust lawsuit against the PGA Tour in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, in a case initially brought by LIV players, but now largely being handled now by the circuit itself.</p> <p>LIV is arguing that the Tour has acted illegally in suspending LIV players from its events, in an attempt to squash a rival. The PGA Tour has countersued, alleging that LIV harmed the Tour by interfering in its deals with golfers.</p> <p>The Tour has said it is confident it will prevail over LIV, and in the DOJ matter. There has also been public skepticism about the merits of the antitrust probe. Members of Congress have raised objections to the DOJ pursuing the golf inquiry at all, accusing the federal agency of helping the Saudis.</p>

Augusta National has featured prominently in LIV's complaint against the Tour, as LIV accuses the Tour of leaning on the famed club to pressure players against joining LIV. The LIV suit also says that Augusta National has taken steps to align with the PGA Tour.

Augusta National representatives, the complaint says, threatened to disinvite players from the Masters if they joined LIV. The club's chairman Fred Ridley personally instructed a number of participants in last year's Masters to not sign on with LIV, it added. Ridley didn't respond to an email seeking comment.

The PGA Tour, in court documents, has denied pressuring Augusta National to do its bidding. It has also broadly disputed the veracity of many of LIV's claims.

In an early filing, seeking to block LIV players' application for a temporary restraining order that would have allowed them to play in the FedEx Cup Playoffs, lawyers for the PGA Tour wrote: "The Tour does not have the space to correct all of [plaintiffs'] half-truths and falsehoods in this brief, and instead has created a separate chart identifying an exemplary set of them."

LIV's legal filing also portrayed Ridley as playing a central role in the situation. It says he, along with the chairman of the R&A, threatened consequences to the CEO of the Asian Tour, which has a partnership with LIV, if it continued to support LIV. The R&A, another international golf governing body, oversees the British Open.

It also says Ridley declined an invitation from Greg Norman, the former golf star who's the commissioner of LIV Golf, when he attempted to set up a meeting to explain how "LIV Golf could operate in the existing professional golf world."

LIV is waging an additional campaign to persuade the Official World Golf Ranking to award points for its events, a fight that could trigger further litigation on this specific issue in Europe, or a push to get the majors to accept alternative rankings.

Other than the brief period every year when it opens its doors to television cameras and throngs of fans, Augusta National is one of the most tight-lipped bodies around. The club rarely comments on its business or on public issues and is closely guarded about even the smallest details of its operation.

Its membership, however, contains some of the most prominent public figures in the country. Members of the club, which was exclusively male until 2012, include business titans and prominent sports power players such as NFL commissioner Roger Goodell and MLB commissioner Rob Manfred. When the club first admitted women a decade ago, former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice gained admission.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Another railroad union rejects contract
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/another-railroad-union-rejects-contract-11666824539?mod=hp_list_pos4
GIST	<p>Members of another railroad union rejected a tentative agreement on wages and work conditions reached with the freight railroads in September, further clouding the outlook for labor peace after the White House brokered a deal to avert a strike.</p> <p>The latest vote, by the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen, sends the two sides back to the negotiating table. Failure to agree on a revised deal could result in a strike as early as December.</p> <p>The Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen is the third union whose members have rejected their respective agreements initially reached with the National Carriers' Conference Committee, which represents the freight railroads in collective bargaining.</p> <p>Of the 12 labor unions involved in bargaining, six have ratified their agreements.</p>

Two of the largest unions, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen and the Transportation Division of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, and Transportation Workers, are still in the process of ratification and are expected to announce results in mid-November.

In July, President Biden appointed a federal panel [to intervene in contract negotiations](#) between major railroads and a group of labor unions because minimal progress had been made in the talks. Even with the recommendations of the Presidential Emergency Board, the two sides weren't able to come to a tentative agreement until a day before a deadline that would have allowed workers to go on a strike.

The Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen, which represents more than 6,000 members affected by the negotiations, said it had been one of the last three unions at the bargaining table.

“For the first time that I can remember, the BRS members voted not to ratify a National Agreement, and with the highest participation rate in BRS history,” said union president Michael Baldwin in a statement. He said the contract was rejected in part because it denied workers paid time off for illness.

The union received 4,639 ballots, a 73% participation rate. Of the ballots received, 61% voted no.

The union will re-engage with the railroads to work on another agreement and will maintain a “status quo” period until early December, meaning they aren't allowed to stop working.

The National Carriers' Conference Committee said it is disappointed in the outcome of the vote and that union members already have paid sickness benefits. It added that historically, unions have agreed that short-term absences would be unpaid in favor of higher compensation for days worked and more generous sickness benefits for longer absences. It also said union concerns have been considered in the Presidential Emergency Board's wage recommendation.

Earlier this month, members of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division voted against their tentative agreement. In mid-September, members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers became the first to reject their first agreement and by late September, the union reached a second tentative agreement with the railroads. The second agreement is now in the ratification process.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 China 'wolf warrior' diplomacy more bite?
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-xi-jinping-set-to-give-wolf-warrior-diplomacy-more-bite-11666784679?mod=hp_listb_pos1
GIST	<p>Chinese leader Xi Jinping is overhauling his foreign policy team with promotions for some of his most loyal and combative envoys, a move likely to embolden his diplomats' aggressive ethos in confronting the West.</p> <p>Qin Gang, Mr. Xi's handpicked envoy to the U.S. since July 2021, is a leading contender to become China's foreign minister in the spring, according to people familiar with the matter. Known for his often brusque rhetoric in asserting Beijing's interests, the 56-year-old was appointed to the Communist Party's Central Committee as one of its 205 full members on Saturday—making him the first incumbent ambassador to be promoted directly to full membership of the elite body since the end of the Mao era.</p> <p>The current foreign minister, Wang Yi, joined the 24-member Politburo on Sunday, succeeding the retiring Yang Jiechi as the party's top foreign-affairs official and leading point of contact with Washington. Once considered an urbane diplomat, Mr. Wang adopted a more forceful and sometimes acerbic persona after becoming Mr. Xi's foreign minister in 2013.</p> <p>Messrs. Qin and Wang are leading exponents of the muscular diplomacy that Mr. Xi demands, driven by the leader's vision of an ascendant and uncompromising China that challenges the U.S. for global pre-eminence. The personnel shuffle, to be completed over the coming months as Mr. Xi assigns portfolios for</p>

[his third leadership term](#), suggests that Beijing remains committed to an adversarial stance toward Washington, undeterred by rising tensions, experts say.

Naming Mr. Qin foreign minister would indicate that “the choice of China’s diplomats are completely dominated by Xi,” who discards convention in choosing personnel, said Yun Sun, director of the China program at the Stimson Center, a Washington-based think tank. Backed by his “special relationship” with China’s leader, Mr. Qin would likely “carry forward Xi’s fighting spirit in his diplomacy with the U.S.,” Ms. Sun said.

China’s relations with the U.S. and other Western powers have soured over Beijing’s trade and industrial policies, rights record and its intimidation campaign against the island democracy of Taiwan, which the Communist Party claims as Chinese territory. Tensions continued mounting this year as Mr. Xi remained supportive of Moscow after Russia invaded Ukraine, while President Biden curbed advanced chip exports to China. U.S. and Chinese officials have discussed the possibility of Messrs. [Biden and Xi meeting on the sidelines](#) of the Group of 20 nations summit in Indonesia next month, though analysts don’t expect conciliatory outcomes if it goes ahead.

Mr. Xi’s foreign-policy appointments also [serve his plan to centralize diplomatic decision-making](#) at the party’s top echelons, according to people familiar with the issue. The Foreign Ministry would focus less on influencing Mr. Xi’s decisions and more on implementing them, and must do so with greater vigor than before, they said.

China’s Foreign Ministry and the State Council Information Office, the government’s publicity arm, didn’t respond to queries.

While many world leaders take personal charge of foreign policy and align their countries’ diplomatic agendas with their priorities, foreign officials and analysts say Mr. Xi’s efforts are noteworthy for how they [have narrowed the space for debate on diplomatic affairs](#), making it harder for officials to push back or question China’s shift toward a more aggressive diplomacy.

“While Mao relied on violence, and Deng relied on money, Xi is increasingly relying on ideology to legitimize his rule. This certainly constrains the flexibility of Chinese diplomats and diplomacy,” said Dylan Loh, an assistant professor at Singapore’s Nanyang Technological University who studies China’s foreign policy. “There is very little room for alternative, fresh thinking on foreign policy issues. Even if there is, it would not be articulated by people who matter to the person that matters most.”

Mr. Xi [wrested control over foreign policy](#) by shaking up China’s Foreign Ministry, whose diplomats were once well-regarded abroad for their subtle professionalism but whom Mr. Xi saw as lacking in fervor. His administration brought more outsiders into the ministry, and empowered other party and state agencies to help shape Beijing’s diplomatic agenda.

The party’s top commissions for foreign affairs and national security, both chaired by Mr. Xi, have in recent years become the main decision-making bodies on diplomatic matters, according to people familiar with the situation. Mr. Xi also began personally weighing in on certain key diplomatic appointments and downgraded the Foreign Ministry’s policy-making functions, according to these people.

Mr. Xi [championed a combative approach in dealing with the West](#) and criticized some Chinese diplomats for allegedly “adoring America,” according to people familiar with his instructions. His demands prompted many foreign-ministry officials to embrace an aggressive “wolf warrior” ethos—named after a Chinese film franchise about a former soldier who battles American-led mercenaries, and characterized by abrasive behavior. Such tactics made headlines this month when Chinese consulate personnel in the U.K. [clashed with anti-Communist Party protesters](#).

Many of the changes started taking hold in 2019, when Communist Party enforcers moved into the Foreign Ministry and told diplomats to show more fighting spirit. Officials with little to no diplomatic experience took ambassadorial and midlevel roles at the Foreign Ministry, bringing expertise in business, economics

and media. China now has about two dozen ambassadors appointed from outside the Foreign Ministry, roughly double the number of such envoys it had in 2012, according to a Wall Street Journal review of government records and state-media reports.

Some officials described such appointments as *chan shazi*, or “mixing in sand,” a Mao-era phrase that refers to the practice of adding outsiders to an established system to shake up the status quo.

Even when [promoting career diplomats](#), Mr. Xi has also broken longstanding precedent in deciding key appointments. He personally picked Mr. Qin, a vice foreign minister at the time, as his envoy to Washington, even though Mr. Qin hadn’t served as an ambassador or held any roles directly related to U.S. affairs, according to people familiar with the matter. The Chinese leader felt that the Foreign Ministry’s preferred candidate—Zheng Zeguang, who became Beijing’s envoy to the U.K.—was too meek to deal with the Americans, the people said.

While a vice foreign minister overseeing relations with Europe, Mr. Qin was known among European diplomats in Beijing for asserting hard-line stances that accorded with Mr. Xi’s priorities. Since arriving in the U.S., Mr. Qin has alternated between cordial outreach—meeting prominent business leaders such as [Elon Musk](#) and Bill Ford—and steely rhetoric, punching back at perceived provocations from Washington.

At one gathering with business delegates earlier this year, Mr. Qin warned that the U.S. must keep its “hands off” Taiwan and reiterated Mr. Xi’s position that China is prepared to seize Taiwan forcefully if peaceful unification isn’t possible, according to a copy of meeting minutes reviewed by the Journal. The envoy also echoed Mr. Xi’s view that the U.S. is declining while China’s global power is on the rise.

The Chinese Embassy in the U.S. referred queries to the Foreign Ministry, which didn’t respond.

Mr. Xi also promoted other foreign-policy veterans to the Central Committee as full members, putting them in contention for top diplomatic roles. They are Liu Haixing, a senior national-security official and a son of a former vice foreign minister, and Liu Jianchao, who oversees the party’s ties with foreign counterparts. Both men spent significant stints outside the Foreign Ministry, in line with Mr. Xi’s push to bolster his diplomatic corps with broader backgrounds and expertise.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 US to re-evaluate Saudi relationship
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/26/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#us-saudi-arabia-oil
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The American secretary of state said on Wednesday that the United States would re-evaluate its relationship with Saudi Arabia over the kingdom’s decision to support Russia by agreeing to cut oil production next month, a move that the White House has asserted helps Moscow’s war effort against Ukraine.</p> <p>Saudi leaders decided earlier this month to join Russia in leading a cartel of oil producers to announce cutting production by two million barrels a day, which could raise prices and help Russia. Moscow is spending heavily on its war in Ukraine.</p> <p>The secretary, Antony J. Blinken, said the United States continued to view the decision announced on Oct. 5 in Vienna by OPEC Plus, a group of 23 oil-producing countries that includes Russia, as “wrong.”</p> <p>“We’ve not been shy about making clear the extent to which we view that as a wrong decision and one that does nothing actually to advance our interests,” he said at a talk at the Bloomberg News bureau in Washington. He also said that the re-evaluation of the U.S.-Saudi relationship would be done “in a very deliberate fashion, in consultation with members of Congress as the president said, to make sure that the relationship better reflects our own interests.”</p>

Saudi officials say OPEC Plus makes its decisions based on economic analysis of the oil market and not on political goals. They also say they are not working in lockstep with Russia on oil policy.

Mr. Blinken said the U.S. government was aware that Saudi Arabia had made some gestures to help Ukraine since the OPEC Plus announcement — including supporting a recent United Nations resolution condemning [Russia's annexation](#) of areas of Ukraine occupied by Russian troops, and an [announcement](#) by Riyadh that it plans to give \$400 million in additional humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

“Both of these are positive developments,” Mr. Blinken said. “They don’t compensate for the decision that was made by OPEC Plus on production, but we take note of that.”

The United States and its allies have imposed sweeping economic sanctions on Russia since it began a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February, but Russia has continued to reap substantial revenues from oil exports because of high global oil prices. The OPEC Plus announcement has not led to a surge in oil prices yet, but U.S. officials are watching for what will happen when the production decline takes effect in November.

The United States and European allies are also trying to work out a complex mechanism for [imposing a price cap on Russian oil](#) at the same time that a partial embargo by Europe on the commodity goes into effect in early December. The OPEC Plus announcement in October complicates those discussions.

U.S. officials scrambled in late September to try to persuade Saudi Arabia not to lead OPEC Plus in announcing the production cut, but failed in their efforts. American officials thought they [had reached a private deal](#) with Saudi officials in May for the Saudis to push OPEC Plus to announce gradual increases to oil production throughout the fall to help bring down high oil prices. Saudi officials dispute that, saying they act based on market conditions.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 US sanctions Russia efforts in Moldova
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/26/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#russia-us-sanctions-moldova
GIST	<p>The Biden administration on Wednesday imposed sanctions on more than 20 Moldovan and Russian individuals and entities for assisting Russian efforts to manipulate Moldova’s political system.</p> <p>Moldova, like its neighbor Ukraine, wants closer relations with the West but has long battled Russian political interference and intimidation. Russian-backed separatists have controlled a strip of the country since 1992, and Moldovan leaders worry that should Russia prevail in Ukraine, their country may be Moscow’s next target.</p> <p>The new American sanctions are aimed at punishing Moldovans allied with Moscow who have worked to keep the country in Russia’s sphere of influence.</p> <p>In a statement, Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken singled out two Moldovan oligarchs, Vladimir Plahotniuc and Ilan Shor. He said that Mr. Plahotniuc’s “bribery of law enforcement officials reflects his longstanding efforts to capture and corrupt Moldova’s judicial and law enforcement institutions, while using his wealth and political influence to undermine political rivals and rule of law in the country.”</p> <p>Mr. Shor, he added, “has worked with other corrupt oligarchs and Moscow-based entities to create political unrest in Moldova and sought to undermine Moldova’s bid for E.U. candidate status.”</p> <p>Mr. Blinken’s statement referred to the two men as “fugitive oligarchs.” Both were prominent political figures in Moldova until they were implicated in a vast 2014 money laundering scheme that stole \$1 billion from Moldovan banks.</p> <p>Mr. Plahotniuc is the former head of the country’s Democratic Party and a former member of parliament. Mr. Shor also leads a political party and was a mayor.</p>

A [Treasury Department statement](#) noted that Mr. Shor’s wife is Sara Lvovna Shor, a Russian pop star who goes by the stage name Jasmin, who has been honored by Russia’s president, Vladimir V. Putin.

Wednesday’s action will freeze any assets the two men have in the United States. The State Department has denied Mr. Plahotniuc and his immediate family members visas since 2020.

Mr. Blinken said that the new sanctions “reaffirm the U.S. commitment to tackling corruption as a first order national security threat and to promoting accountability for systemic efforts to undermine Moldova’s democratic institutions and elections.”

The Treasury Department’s statement also singled out Igor Chayka, a Russian businessman who, along with the Kremlin’s spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, “developed detailed plans to undermine Moldovan president Maia Sandu and return Moldova to Russia’s sphere of influence” ahead of Moldova’s 2021 elections.

Mr. Chayka then worked with Mr. Shor and the Moldovan Socialist Party, the statement said. “In exchange for the promise of Russian support in the election, Chayka obtained backing for legislation preferred by the Kremlin, including a law to strip Moldova’s president of control of the country’s intelligence agency,” it explained.

The elections wound up being a [victory for pro-Western reformers](#), who have long resisted Russian influence within the former Soviet republic.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 A dam looms large in battle for Kherson
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/26/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#the-nova-kakhovka-dam-looms-large-in-the-possible-battle-for-kherson
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine — As Ukrainian forces battle to advance on the southern port city of Kherson, a hydroelectric dam that holds back a body of water the size of Utah’s Great Salt Lake has emerged as a linchpin in the fight for the region.</p> <p>The Nova Kakhovka dam, less than 50 miles northeast of Kherson, is the last major crossing over the Dnipro River available to thousands of Russian soldiers fighting around the strategic southern city, which Moscow seized early in the war. If Ukraine were to retake the dam, that could give thousands of Russian soldiers nowhere to retreat. Ukrainian strikes on small bridges over the dam’s spillway have already partly closed the route to vehicle traffic.</p> <p>If Kyiv takes the dam, Russia’s forces “will have to make a decision very quickly — either very, very quickly leave the city and get out, or risk ending up in the same situation that our units in Mariupol found themselves in earlier,” Gen. Kyrylo O. Budanov, the head of Ukraine’s military intelligence service, said this week. He was referring to the bloody siege in which encircled Ukrainian fighters held out for weeks before being forced to surrender.</p> <p>Aside from being a military asset, the dam is also a critical piece of infrastructure that even before the war was a flash point. Its reservoir is crucial to the operations of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, about 100 miles upriver, because it provides water necessary for cooling functions.</p> <p>As Russian positions grew more precarious, Moscow accused Ukraine of planning to destroy the dam — a claim that Ukraine and its Western allies dismissed as absurd. Kyiv has said that it had no incentive to flood its own land and that the Russian accusations, made without evidence, were a sign Moscow was preparing a “false flag” operation to blow up the dam itself, potentially flooding 80 towns, villages and cities, including Kherson.</p>

	<p>Flooding could slow the Ukrainian advance but also risks causing problems for Russian forces on the eastern banks of the Dnipro.</p> <p>“Russia is consciously laying the groundwork for a large-scale disaster in Ukraine’s south,” President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine warned during an address to the European Council last week.</p> <p>Analysts note the similarities to Moscow’s unfounded accusations that Ukraine was planning to use a dirty bomb. Ukraine’s Western allies have warned that Russia was making such accusations as a possible pretext to launch its own attack.</p> <p>Ukrainian soldiers are drawing closer, after liberating 90 villages in the Kherson region since the start of their counteroffensive at the end of August, and Russian forces have shown signs they may be considering a retreat from the city of Kherson.</p> <p>“We are using the tactics of taking back our villages, meters and kilometers step by step, and we will continue to do that,” Ukraine’s defense minister, Oleksiy Reznikov, said on Wednesday in an interview with Fox News.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/26 Exodus of automakers from Russia
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/26/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#ford-and-mercedes-move-to-sell-assets-in-russia-completing-an-exodus-of-automakers
GIST	<p>Ford Motor Co. and Mercedes-Benz said Wednesday they took more permanent steps to leave Russia, part of an auto industry exodus following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>Ford said it had completed sale of its shares in its Russian joint venture, Sollers Ford, for a “nominal” sum. Mercedes said it would withdraw from the Russian market and sell its assets there.</p> <p>Both companies suspended manufacturing in Russia soon after the war began. By selling their assets in Russia, the companies are acknowledging that it will not be possible to return to the market anytime soon.</p> <p>Virtually all European and American automakers have stopped making cars in Russia, which in any case would be nearly impossible because of sanctions that restrict the flow of components and raw materials.</p> <p>After president Vladimir V. Putin of Russia ordered the invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, multinational companies have been forced to re-evaluate their links with Russia. Some, like McDonald’s, PepsiCo and Shell, had built relationships with the country over decades and were faced with untangling complicated deals.</p> <p>Under pressure from investors and consumers, many Western companies have started to unwind their investments, close stores and pause sales in Russia. Some, after at first taking temporary measures, have decided to exit the country completely.</p> <p>With an economy smaller than Italy’s even before sanctions crippled the economy, Russia was never a huge market for foreign automakers. Still, sales there were significant for companies like Renault, Hyundai and Volkswagen, all of which have suspended manufacturing in Russia.</p> <p>Many of the automakers have expressed the hope they will be able to return, including Ford. The company said Wednesday that it retained an option to repurchase its 49 percent share in the Russian joint venture within five years “should the global situation change.”</p>

	If foreign automakers remain permanently estranged from Russia, the country's domestic manufacturers are likely to lose access to technological advances at a time when software and a shift to electric vehicles are fundamentally changing the industry.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 IEA: war speeds up clean energy shift
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/27/climate/global-clean-energy-iea.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The energy crisis sparked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine is likely to speed up rather than slow down the global transition away from fossil fuels and toward cleaner technologies like wind, solar and electric vehicles, the world's leading energy agency said Thursday.</p> <p>While some countries have been burning more fossil fuels such as coal this year in response to natural gas shortages caused by the war in Ukraine, that effect is expected to be short-lived, the International Energy Agency said in its annual World Energy Outlook, a 524-page report that forecasts global energy trends to 2050.</p> <p>Instead, for the first time, the agency now predicts that worldwide demand for every type of fossil fuel will peak in the near future.</p> <p>One major reason is that many countries have responded to soaring prices for fossil fuels this year by embracing wind turbines, solar panels, nuclear power plants, hydrogen fuels, electric vehicles and electric heat pumps. In the United States, Congress approved more than \$370 billion in spending for such technologies under the recent Inflation Reduction Act. Japan is pursuing a new "green transformation" program that will help fund nuclear power, hydrogen and other low-emissions technologies. China, India and South Korea have all ratcheted up national targets for renewable and nuclear power.</p> <p>And yet, the shift toward cleaner sources of energy still isn't happening fast enough to avoid dangerous levels of global warming, the agency said, not unless governments take much stronger action to reduce their planet-warming carbon dioxide emissions over the next few years.</p> <p>Based on current policies put in place by national governments, global coal use is expected to start declining in the next few years, natural gas demand is likely to hit a plateau by the end of this decade and oil use is projected to level off by the mid-2030s.</p> <p>Meanwhile, global investment in clean energy is now expected to rise from \$1.3 trillion in 2022 to more than \$2 trillion annually by 2030, a significant shift, the agency said.</p> <p>"It's notable that many of these new clean energy targets aren't being put in place solely for climate change reasons," said Fatih Birol, the agency's executive director, in an interview. "Increasingly, the big drivers are energy security as well as industrial policy — a lot of countries want to be at the leading edge of the energy industries of the future."</p> <p>A new United Nations report on past emissions commitments indicates that severe disruption would be hard to avoid on the current trajectory.</p> <p>Current energy policies put the world on track to reach peak carbon dioxide emissions by 2025 and warm roughly 2.5 degrees Celsius (4.5 degrees Fahrenheit) by 2100 compared with preindustrial levels, the energy agency estimated. That is in line with separate projections released Wednesday by the United Nations, which analyzed nations' stated promises to tackle emissions.</p> <p>By contrast, many world leaders hope to limit average global warming to around 1.5 degrees Celsius to avoid some of the most dire and irreversible risks from climate change, such as widespread crop failures or ecosystem collapse. That would require much steeper cuts in greenhouse gases, with emissions not just peaking in the next few years but falling nearly in half by the end of this decade, scientists have said.</p>

“If we want to hit those more ambitious climate targets, we’d likely need to see about \$4 trillion in clean energy investment by 2030,” Dr. Birol said, or double what the agency currently projects. “In particular, there’s not nearly enough investment going into the developing world.”

This year, global carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels [are expected to rise roughly 1 percent](#) and approach record highs, in part because of an uptick in coal use in places like Europe as countries scramble to replace lost Russian gas. (Coal is the most polluting of all fossil fuels.)

Still, that is a far smaller increase than some analysts had feared when war in Ukraine first broke out. The rise in emissions would have been three times as large had it not been for a rapid deployment of wind turbines, solar panels and electric vehicles worldwide, the agency said. Soaring energy prices and weak economic growth in Europe and China also contributed to keep emissions down.

And the recent rise in coal use may prove fleeting. European nations are currently planning to install roughly 50 gigawatts worth of renewable power next year, which would be more than enough to supplant this year’s increase in coal generation. And globally, the agency does not expect investment in new coal plants to increase beyond what was already expected.

Russia, which had been the world’s leading exporter of fossil fuels, is expected to be hit especially hard by the energy disruptions it has largely created. As European nations race to reduce their reliance on Russian oil and gas, Russia is likely to face challenges in finding new markets in Asia, particularly for its natural gas, the report said. As a result, Russian fossil fuel exports are unlikely to return to their pre-war levels.

But even though the current energy crisis is expected to be a boon for cleaner technologies in the long run, it is exacting a painful toll now, the report found.

Governments around the world have already committed roughly \$500 billion this year to shield consumers from soaring energy prices. And while European nations currently appear to have enough natural gas in storage to get them through a mild winter this year, the report warns that next winter in Europe “could be even tougher” as stocks are drawn down and new supplies to replace Russian gas, such as increased shipments from the United States or Qatar, are slow to come online.

The situation looks even more dire in developing countries such as Pakistan and Bangladesh, which are facing energy shortages as deliveries of liquefied natural gas are diverted to Europe. Nearly 75 million people around the world who recently gained access to electricity are likely to lose it this year, the report said. If that happens, it would be the first time in a decade that the number of people worldwide who lack access to modern energy has risen.

There is still a possibility that soaring energy prices could produce social unrest and pushback against climate and clean energy policies in some countries. While the report concluded that climate change policies are not chiefly responsible for the spike in prices — instead, it notes that renewable power and home weatherization efforts have actually blunted the impact of energy shocks in many regions — there is always the risk that governments could feel pressured to change course, Dr. Birol said.

The new report comes less than two weeks before nations are set to gather at U.N. climate talks in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, where diplomats will discuss whether and how to step up efforts to curb fossil fuel emissions and provide more financial aid from richer to poorer nations.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Russia intensifies propaganda campaign
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/26/us/politics/russia-propaganda-dirty-bomb.html
GIST	WASHINGTON — Since before the war, Russia has spread disinformation about its need to stamp out Nazism in Ukraine. But in recent days, Moscow’s propaganda has shifted, arguing that it is battling terrorism and falsely accusing Ukraine of planning a dirty bomb attack as part of that narrative.

The new propaganda, spread on social media and in the news, also includes unsupported allegations that the Ukrainian government intends to destroy a dam in its own territory, according to European and American government officials and independent researchers.

The push is meant to shore up Russian support for the war but also to denigrate Ukraine in the West, potentially softening support for more arms shipments to Kyiv, officials and researchers say.

“They seem to have decided on a talking point that this is a counterterrorism operation now,” said Kyle Walter, who leads the U.S. investigation team at Logically, a tech start-up that helps governments and businesses counter disinformation. “Rather than framing this as something that’s anti-Nazi or anti-Satanist, you now have a concerted effort to frame it as a counterterrorism operation.”

The counterterrorism narratives, according to American officials, are part of a wider propaganda web, all aimed at making Russians feel more involved in the war.

The Kremlin, which has begun calling its fight in Ukraine the people’s war, is trying to convince its public that the conflict is not a war of choice for Moscow, but an existential fight to save the country. Russian officials have used the [disinformation about dirty bomb attacks](#) to highlight other attacks inside Russia by Ukraine, and stoke anger toward Ukraine with the Russian people, according to American and European officials.

On Wednesday, President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia repeated the unfounded claim that Ukraine’s government was plotting a dirty bomb attack. The accusation came as Russia started its annual nuclear military exercises, but U.S. officials said those drills appeared routine and included all of the usual notifications.

The information operations do not appear to have swayed public opinion in the West, but social media posts on the possibility of a dirty bomb attack have gained traction in Russia.

FilterLabs, a firm that tracks public sentiment in Russia and elsewhere, noted a surge this week in discussions about nuclear terrorism by Ukraine. Russians have equated Ukraine’s plans with Osama bin Laden’s threats against the United States and say Washington should end its support of Ukraine.

Russia’s claims that Ukraine is using terrorist tactics are not new; even narratives comparing Ukraine to bin Laden have been discussed in Russia since August. But the intensity of the discussions increased this week, said Jonathan Teubner, the chief executive of FilterLabs.

“The sources of the narrative are mostly Kremlin-aligned sites,” Mr. Teubner said. “But it is being repeated by some independent outlets who are attempting to refute it.”

Even before the Russian defense minister, Sergei K. Shoigu, made the dirty bomb accusation in public this weekend, the Russian news media had discussed the possibility that Ukraine could start a nuclear conflict.

By framing Ukraine as the potential nuclear aggressor, Russia can ratchet up tensions without incurring the wrath of its population or further undermining support for Mr. Putin.

Using disinformation and propaganda is an important part of Mr. Putin’s playbook. Before the invasion, Moscow began pushing a variety of false narratives about Ukraine. Researchers at Logically and other firms tracked an increase in accusations that Ukrainians were Nazis and were planning a genocide against Russian speakers in eastern Ukraine.

U.S. officials said some of the accusations Russia leveled at Ukraine in social media before the war, such as that Kyiv was planning a chemical attack, were part of a ploy to create a false pretext for an invasion.

	<p>Now, U.S. officials are divided over whether Russia actually believes Ukraine intends to conduct a terrorism campaign, including use of a dirty bomb, or if the propaganda push is purely an excuse to justify tougher action.</p> <p>Some American officials said that given other covert Ukrainian action, like the car bomb attack that killed the daughter of a prominent Russian ultranationalist and the strike against a bridge to Crimea, Russian officials have convinced themselves, potentially based on faulty intelligence, that Ukraine has a dirty bomb.</p> <p>And the Russian news media has spread disinformation about a dirty bomb attack while discussing actual Ukrainian actions, such as the bridge strike, the car bomb and attacks against arms depots in Crimea and Russia.</p> <p>“You can zero in on the dirty bombs specifically, but I think it represents a wider trend that’s pretty cohesive in recent weeks,” said Mr. Walter, the investigator at Logically. “Which is the idea that Russia is pushing that Ukraine is a terrorist state.”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/26 Does Constitution guarantee ‘right to vote’?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/26/us/voting-rights-constitution.html
GIST	<p>The Constitution makes reference to voting 15 times in the original document and another 22 in the amendments. But somewhat surprisingly, none of those mentions makes an explicit declaration that Americans have a right to vote — something many politicians and their supporters consider fundamental to democracy. Here’s a look at why that is, and what rights voters actually have.</p> <p>What did the founding fathers believe about the right to vote?</p> <p>If it seems odd that such a fundamental right was not enshrined in writing, the explanation is simple enough: The authors of the Constitution, many of them deeply suspicious of universal suffrage, could not agree on a single standard for the right to cast a ballot.</p> <p>For all their talk about “We, the people,” most of the founding fathers wanted to limit voting rights to property owners like themselves, the Harvard law professor and historian Michael J. Klarman wrote in his 2016 book “The Framers’ Coup: The Making of the United States Constitution.”</p> <p>Gouverneur Morris, a New Yorker who wrote the preamble to the Constitution, argued that “the ignorant and the dependent can be as little trusted with the public interest” as could children, Dr. Klarman wrote. James Madison warned that voting should be restricted to the wealthy, “the safest repositories of republican liberty,” because the poorer classes would be swayed by populist appeals. Benjamin Franklin, the most prominent dissenter, pointed out that it was the commoners who had fought for and won American independence and that the rich were hardly immune to corrupting influences.</p> <p>In the end, the property requirement failed to make it into the Constitution in part because many states already had extended the franchise beyond landholders. Disenfranchising those voters, the constitutional convention delegates feared, could wreck what already seemed to be shaky prospects for approving the new Constitution.</p> <p>Their compromise left decisions on voter qualifications to the states, but it placed the choice of United States senators and the president in the hands of state legislators, not voters. That changed in the early 19th century, as state legislatures increasingly delegated the choice of presidential electors to ordinary voters, and in 1913, after the 17th Amendment decreed the popular election of senators.</p> <p>Does a right to vote exist today?</p> <p>Various constitutional amendments prohibit denying voting rights to women, racial minorities, citizens over age 18 and people unable to pay election-related fees like poll taxes.</p>

But the Constitution contains no explicit right to vote. Rather, the Supreme Court has recognized an implicit right to vote via the 14th Amendment, enacted in 1868 after the Civil War, which aimed to protect the civil rights of people who had been enslaved and guarantees “the equal protection of the laws.”

The court has recognized it in a handful of decisions dealing with the meaning of those amendments. “Undeniably the Constitution of the United States protects the right of all qualified citizens to vote, in state as well as in federal elections,” Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote in the historic 1964 ruling, *Reynolds v. Sims*, that cemented the concept that every vote has an equal value. But even a Supreme Court ruling falls short of the guarantees of rights such as freedom of speech and religion that are embedded in the Bill of Rights.

In practice, the Constitution leaves most decisions about the ballot to state and federal legislators, saying that the “times, places and manner” of elections are state matters unless Congress sets nationwide standards.

What most Americans see as an inalienable right to vote is actually the product of decades of court rulings and legislative decisions, most of them — but hardly all — slowly expanding a legal guarantee of the ability to cast a ballot. Congress could give everyone the right to vote by mail, but since it has not, mail balloting is subject to a jumble of state laws. The 19th Amendment, ratified in 1920, gave women the right to vote, but by then, Wyoming had been letting women vote for 50 years, even when it was a territory, not a state.

What does the future hold?

For decades, courts and Congress have taken the lead in upholding a legal right to vote — in the Voting Rights Act of 1965; in the 1966 Supreme Court case, *Harper v. Virginia Board of Elections*, which outlawed poll taxes; in federal legislation in 1993 that set ground rules for registering new voters and removing existing voters from the rolls.

In lawsuits seeking to enforce or protect existing election laws, the 14th Amendment’s implicit guarantee of voting rights has become a mainstay of plaintiffs’ arguments.

“As long as those precedents are respected, I think it’s fair to say there’s a constitutional protection of a basic right to vote,” Edward B. Foley, a leading scholar of election law at Ohio State University, said in an interview.

But the evolution of an increasingly conservative Supreme Court with a skeptical approach to voting rights and an emerging record of upending precedents means that the current interpretation of the right to vote is no longer a sure bet, he said.

The court is considering two major voting cases this term — one that could limit the Voting Rights Act’s power to remedy racial disparities in political districts, the other arguing that state courts have no authority to overturn legislative decisions on political redistricting and election laws — that could reverse once-solid precedents.

Indeed, what most voters would consider a foundational right — electing a president — exists nowhere in the Constitution, which says presidential electors may be appointed “in such Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct.”

Democrats in both the U.S. House and Senate filed legislation last year that would [establish a statutory right to vote](#), but neither bill has received a hearing. And for years, voting-rights advocates have pressed for a new constitutional amendment affirming citizens’ right to cast a ballot. So far, it’s all been to no avail.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Dangerous alliance: Iran sides with Russia
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/26/dangerous-alliance-iran-sides-russia-ukraine-war-r/

Iran has rapidly and unexpectedly emerged as Russia's most reliable wartime partner, providing drones and missiles for its brutal attacks on Ukrainian civilians, on-the-ground technical support for its flight operators and even turbines to help Russia's gas industry skirt Western economic sanctions.

The growing Moscow-Tehran partnership and Iran's status as a borderline active participant in the Russia-Ukraine war have sparked questions that stretch far beyond the conflict. Foreign policy analysts say Iran's hard-line religious leaders have made a calculated choice to cast their lot with Russia as a way to divert Western attention away from the Middle East and as an attempt to weaken U.S. power abroad.

The Kremlin's increasing reliance on Iranian drones and other hardware also gives Iran's military leaders daily feedback on how their equipment performs on the battlefield against a real-world enemy, which could prove invaluable if and when Iran needs to use those capabilities in a large-scale war of its own.

Indeed, analysts say Tehran sees both immediate and long-term benefits from an alliance with Russia, which has welcomed Iranian support with open arms as its military stockpiles dwindle and as it faces increasing economic and geopolitical pressure from the U.S. and its allies over its invasion of Ukraine.

Iran's long-term play hinges on deepening ties with Russia and China, seen as the most powerful leaders in an anti-Western movement that could challenge U.S. global power in the 21st century.

Moscow and Tehran appear to have bonded over their shared status as the focus of U.S. sanctions and their shared antipathy to a global strategic order dominated by NATO and America's network of international allies.

With a weak economy and a military that pales in comparison with the world's strongest, Iran needs to appear to bring something to the table.

"Viewed in this context, a deal to supply Russia with drones, missiles, and military advisers makes strategic sense for Iran and can demonstrate the latter's value to one of its two senior partners in the anti-Western entente," John Hardie and Behnam Ben Taleblu, scholars at the think tank Foundation for Defense of Democracies, wrote in a piece for Foreign Policy magazine published Wednesday.

"By fueling the crisis in Ukraine, Iran likely hopes to lead the United States to continue diverting its attention from the Middle East," they said. "Under three successive presidents, Washington has signaled it would prefer to largely divest from the region to shift military resources elsewhere and focus attention on problems at home. Now that [Russian President Vladimir] Putin's war in Ukraine is absorbing Western attention and resources, Tehran sees an opportunity to feed this trend."

For the record, at least, Iranian leaders adamantly deny supplying drones and other military assets to Russia. They call the reports U.S. disinformation. Still, "kamikaze" drones of what appear to be clearly Iranian design have been shown at attack sites inside Ukraine, and the U.S. and European Union have moved to sanction Tehran for its military support of Moscow.

Ukrainian and Western officials say Iran has provided Russia with a host of military equipment, including short-range Zolfaghar ballistic missiles and Shahed-136 drones. The Shahed-136 has been one of Moscow's weapons of choice in recent attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure.

What's more, Western officials say Iranian troops are in Ukraine helping Russian troops fly those drone missions. The presence of Iranian personnel on the ground in a war zone alongside Russian troops seems to undercut Tehran's assertion that it is a neutral party and that its weapons sales to Russia do not necessarily mean it backs Moscow's war effort.

Warming ties between Russia and Iran were on display in July when Mr. Putin visited Tehran — his first foreign trip outside the boundaries of the old Soviet Union after ordering the Ukraine invasion in

February. Russia and Iran have been supporting President Bashar Assad in Syria's bloody civil war, and despite Iran's professed neutrality, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei largely embraced Mr. Putin's version of events over who was to blame for the Ukraine war.

"NATO is a dangerous entity," the ayatollah said. "The West is totally opposed to a strong, independent Russia. ... If [NATO] hadn't been stopped in Ukraine, it would have later started a similar war in Crimea."

Iran's support extends even beyond the military realm. On Sunday, Iran announced a contract to supply Russia with 40 turbines for its gas industry, Agence France-Presse reported.

Western economic sanctions, the Kremlin says, have prevented the maintenance and repair of Russian turbines, endangering the country's energy production and its ability to export oil and natural gas to help finance the war.

Calculated decisions

For all its help, Iran surely expects something in return. Mr. Hardie and Mr. Taleblu said Iran might want military hardware, perhaps Russia's famed S-400 air defense system. In Iran's eyes, such a system could prove crucial in defending itself against any U.S. or Israeli airstrikes.

Some fear Tehran may have even more far-reaching aims. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy speculated this week that Russia might return the favor by offering direct assistance with Iran's nuclear weapons program.

"In eight months of full-scale war, Russia has used almost 4,500 missiles against us. And their stock of missiles is dwindling. That is why Russia went looking for affordable weapons in other countries to continue terror. It found them in Iran," Mr. Zelenskyy said Monday in a speech to Haaretz's Israel Democracy Conference.

"I have a question for you: How does Russia pay Iran for this, in your opinion?" he asked. "Is Iran just interested in money? Probably not money at all, but Russian assistance to the Iranian nuclear program. Probably, this is exactly the meaning of their alliance."

Foreign policy specialists largely reject that idea. They say many Russian leaders oppose the idea of Iran as a nuclear power. Despite its own nuclear saber-rattling in Ukraine, Russia likely would see little strategic benefit in helping another nation — in this case, one with deep, lasting ties to Islamic terrorist organizations — become a nuclear state.

At the same time, Iran's decision to back Russia has helped derail a multilateral push to rein in Tehran's nuclear program. After 18 months of aggressive diplomacy, Biden administration officials are signaling that the effort to revive the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is no longer a focus thanks to Iran's support for Russia and its brutal crackdown on domestic protests.

"It's not even on the agenda. It's not a focus because there's no movement," Robert Malley, the State Department's special Iran envoy, told CNN recently in reference to JCPOA negotiations.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters Wednesday that he is pessimistic about "a near-term prospect" of a revival of the 2015 nuclear deal. He said Iran is to blame for "trying to inject" new, unrelated demands into the multilateral talks.

Signed by the U.S., Britain, France, Germany, China, Russia and Iran, the JCPOA limited Iran's nuclear program in exchange for economic sanctions relief. President Trump pulled the U.S. out of that deal in 2018 and instituted a "maximum pressure" economic campaign against Iran.

	<p>Until recently, Biden administration officials insisted that they would continue diplomacy with Iran in an effort to stop the nation from acquiring a nuclear weapon, even as relations on other fronts deteriorated. Those talks have been shelved, and officials now focus on how Iran's support for Russia is cutting off the country even more from the rest of the world.</p> <p>"It's another sign of how isolated both Russia and Iran are and they have to rely on each other. They continue to lie to the world, but the facts are clear," White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told Politico late last week. "The supreme leader [of Iran] should answer why he has Iran directly engaged on the ground and through the provision of weapons that enable Russia to kill civilians and damage civilian infrastructure in Ukraine. It's just another example of Iran's desire to export violence, and both Iran and Russia need to be held accountable for it."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Hurdles to overcome electric school buses
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/26/joe-biden-celebrates-first-1-billion-for-electric-/
GIST	<p>The Biden administration on Wednesday identified school districts that will receive nearly \$1 billion over the next year to purchase new zero-emission school buses and charging stations.</p> <p>The money will go to nearly 400 school districts across 50 states, the District of Columbia and several Tribes and U.S. territories to purchase more than 2,400 clean buses, 95% of which will run on electricity. The others will operate on compressed natural gas or propane.</p> <p>The funds are part of a five-year, \$5 billion Clean School Bus Program created by last year's bipartisan infrastructure law.</p> <p>The administration says the initiative will bear the brunt of the cost for school districts to slash their emissions, but school bus operators are pumping the brakes on the notion they'll be able to completely kick diesel-powered buses to the curb anytime soon.</p> <p>They warned that there are a host of obstacles to overcome.</p> <p>"It's not that we can't get there, but there are some hurdles in front of us for sure," said Curt Macysyn, executive director of the National School Transportation Association that represents private bus contractors. "With this, there's a whole planning aspect that's involved with the charging infrastructure and making sure that your bus depot is capable of handling the power load to get these buses charged."</p> <p>Among the concerns is the logistics of rolling out electric fleets with limited range and charging capabilities, particularly in rural areas. Nearly all of the chosen school districts receiving the first tranche of money — 99% — serve primarily low-income, rural, and/or Tribal students.</p> <p>Electric school buses made by Blue Bird, a leading school bus manufacturer, have a maximum range of 120 miles before needing to be recharged, which can take anywhere from 3 to 8 hours. The administration is kicking in an extra \$20,000 for each bus purchased to put toward charging infrastructure.</p> <p>Another major challenge is that roughly 40% of the country's 480,000 school buses are owned and operated by private companies that are contracted by schools. That means they don't have direct access to the grant money and must work with the districts to secure it, adding another layer of bureaucracy that could slow progress.</p> <p>"That causes logistical problems for us," Mr. Macysyn said. "It's creating something that's more complicated than it needs to be."</p> <p>Karl Simon, director of the EPA's Transportation and Climate Division, said they designed the program with private transportation providers in mind and that the EPA is prepared to work with both them and the school districts they serve to get the money out the door.</p>

	The \$1 billion plan will be announced Wednesday by Vice President Kamala Harris and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Michael Regan in Seattle.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 VP in Seattle touts electric school buses
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/vice-president-kamala-harris-in-seattle-touts-electric-school-buses-infrastructure-bill/
GIST	<p>Kamala Harris made her first visit as vice president to Seattle on Wednesday, announcing a nearly \$1 billion award to school districts to replace older buses with electric and cleaner-running models.</p> <p>The visit also mixed in midterm partisan politics as Harris headlined a fundraiser for U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, urging a crowd of Democrats to reelect Murray and ward off handing control of the Senate to Republicans.</p> <p>The bus funding announced Wednesday is part of a total of \$5 billion for cleaner school buses to be distributed over five years, included in the bipartisan infrastructure law passed by Congress late last year.</p> <p>Harris spoke for about eight minutes to an invite-only crowd of several hundred in the bowels of Lumen Field against a backdrop of four electric school buses.</p> <p>“Who doesn’t love a yellow school bus?” she asked. “It’s part of our experience growing up, it’s part of a nostalgia, a memory of the excitement and joy of going to school to be with your favorite teacher, to be with your friends and to learn.”</p> <p>Harris spoke in front of a Saf-T-Liner C2 Jouley electric bus that can go up to 138 miles on a charge and was purchased this year using a state grant. It’s one of three electric buses in the Highline School District, which serves the Burien, SeaTac and Des Moines area.</p> <p>Every day, 25 million kids ride on yellow school buses, Harris said, calling it the largest form of public transit in the country. And 95% of those buses currently run on diesel, she said, emitting climate-warming greenhouse gases and contributing to health issues like asthma.</p> <p>“We are witnessing around our country and around the world the effects of extreme climate,” she said. “What we’re announcing today is a step forward in our nation’s commitment to be a leader on these issues, to reduce greenhouse gases, to invest in our economy, to invest in job creation, to invest in building the skills of America’s workforce.”</p> <p>Four Washington school districts have, so far, applied for and received funding to replace aging diesel-powered buses with electric, natural gas or propane models: Easton, Pomeroy, South Whidbey and Toppenish.</p> <p>The \$1 trillion infrastructure bill, signed by President Joe Biden last year, includes billions for roads, public transit, ports and the power grid.</p> <p>Harris, while in the Senate in 2019, had originally sponsored legislation to provide funding to electrify the nation’s school buses. Murray, Washington’s senior senator, then offered similar standalone legislation last year, before working to get the funding included in the massive infrastructure package.</p> <p>“Building new, clean, electric buses and getting them on the roads is good for our kids, our economy and our planet,” Murray said.</p> <p>The \$1 billion in rebates awarded for school buses will help purchase nearly 2,500 school buses in all 50 states, 95% of them electric, according to the White House.</p>

Seattle Public Schools contracts its transportation needs out to two bus contractors: First Student, which has said electric buses are not in its near future, and Zum, which has promised it will include electric buses in its fleet by the end of the school year.

There are or will soon be about 80 electric school buses on the roads in Washington, Gov. Jay Inslee said Wednesday.

Harris appeared with Inslee; Michael Regan, head of the Environmental Protection Agency; Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell; and Murray, who is seeking her sixth term and is facing her most competitive race since 2010.

Murray's opponent, Republican Tiffany Smiley, has said climate change should be fought at the local level. At a recent debate, she declined to say whether she believed human actions are contributing to climate change.

In Washington, ballots are in the hands of voters who are weighing competitive races for U.S. Senate and for at least two congressional races.

While Murray has led in polls, Smiley has narrowed the gap, and outraised the incumbent senator in the most recent quarter of fundraising.

The Harris visit shows Democrats are taking no chances, seeking to shore up Murray in the closing days before the Nov. 8 general election.

At the midday fundraiser for Murray, U.S. Reps. Suzan DelBene, D-Medina; Marilyn Strickland, D-Tacoma; and Sen. Maria Cantwell urged Democrats to vote early and ensure friends and family, and strangers on the street, to do the same.

Harris emphasized the stakes of the midterm election to the crowd of about 550 people packed into The Showbox music venue near Pike Place Market—including for abortion rights already diminished following the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling striking down Roe v. Wade.

"These extremist so-called leaders around the country are proposing and passing laws that will criminalize doctors and nurses, literally put them in jail for providing reproductive care," Harris said.

Murray and Harris pledged to pass legislation to codify Roe v. Wade into federal law if Democrats are able to pick up a couple of seats in the Senate that is now evenly divided 50-50.

Murray also attacked Smiley for declining to say whether people are contributing to climate change.

"Does anybody here think we should send a climate denier to the United States Senate?" Murray asked the crowd, drawing a loud chorus of "No!" "You shouldn't be representing the state of Washington in the United States Senate if you can't admit that climate change is real."

Attendees at the fundraiser paid at least \$200 to attend, with some contributing the maximum legal limit of \$2,900 to the campaign, and some other supporters attended free of charge, said Murray campaign spokesperson Amir Avin in an email. He said the event raised "well over six figures."

Smiley, who is on a cross-state campaign bus tour, released a statement during Harris's visit.

"We have a humanitarian crisis at the border. Vice President Kamala Harris – Joe Biden's so-called border czar – has failed us and Patty Murray has gone right along and made it worse. With Joe Biden, Kamala Harris and Patty Murray, it is easier for a child to find fentanyl than a for parent to find baby formula. No more!" she said.

HEADLINE	10/26 Sunshine Protection Act: DST to end?
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/nation-world/daylight-saving-time-ends/507-9acccaa7-b6a5-4993-b3f2-fa4ab8fb90d2
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Daylight saving time is coming to an end on the first Sunday of November, but could this be the last time?</p> <p>Clocks will "fall back" one hour at 2 a.m. on Nov. 6, granting most people an extra hour of sleep. With the change comes earlier sunrises and nightfall well before 7 p.m. It won't be until March when we fiddle with our clocks to "spring ahead" once again.</p> <p>One federal bill, already fully approved by the U.S. Senate, could change things before the clocks switch again in 2023. The Sunshine Protection Act, introduced by Republican Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, is proposing permanent daylight saving time for all states.</p> <p>The bill hasn't seen progress since March as it currently awaits a review by the House of Representatives, and if passed, a signature from President Biden.</p> <p>Why was daylight saving time created?</p> <p>The practice has been implemented in some form since World War I when Germany originally introduced it to conserve power and energy by extending daylight hours.</p> <p>The Standard Time Act in 1918 was the first introduction of daylight saving time to American clocks. The temporary measure, which once held the nickname 'war time,' lasted from spring to fall and was intended to cut energy costs during World War I. The act is also responsible for the five time zones still in place today.</p> <p>The Department of Transportation was created and given regulatory power over time zones and daylight saving time in 1966. In order to correct confusing and alternating time zones, the Uniform Time Act of 1966 sought a nationwide standard for daylight saving time -- from the last Sunday in April to the last Sunday in October.</p> <p>Few changes have happened since then. Most recently, daylight saving time was extended by a few weeks in 2005 when former President George Bush changed the law. It is now observed from the second Sunday in March until the first Sunday in November.</p> <p>Despite the national observance, Arizona and Hawaii don't observe daylight saving time. Under federal law, states are allowed to opt out of daylight saving time and remain on standard time, but are not allowed to remain on daylight time.</p> <p>The U.S. has previously implemented daylight savings time year-round twice, once in World War II for fuel conservation and once in 1974 as "trial run" during an energy crisis.</p> <p>While there is some belief that daylight saving time reduces electricity consumption, traffic and crime, two studies, one performed in 1975 and one in 2005, when DST was extended, revealed that much of the changes in energy consumption, traffic and crime were "statistically insignificant." The 2005 study found that each day of extended daylight saving time lowered total national electricity consumption by 0.5%.</p> <p>Where does the Sunshine Protection Act stand?</p> <p>Despite the over 50 years of observance, several states there have been pushes by over 29 states to change the practice.</p> <p>With the Sunshine Protection Act awaiting review from the House, there's a possibility that daylight saving time could be the new standard time nationwide. If it becomes law, clocks will spring forward in March and would not change come Nov. 5, 2023.</p>

	Congress is the only one that can change the observance period for daylight saving time. Since 2015, at least 45 states proposed bills to change their observance of DST, according to the Congressional Research Service .
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 SFD first-ever live fire training in apt bldg.
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/seattle-fire-department-conduct-first-live-fire-training-apartment-building/NF5CE5TFLJAFJYA44YLAZSILA/
GIST	<p>For the first time in the history of the Seattle Fire Department's Acquired Structure Program, the department will conduct live-fire training at an apartment building.</p> <p>The training of current and new firefighter recruits at a vacant apartment building has been active in the 600 block of Second Avenue West between Oct. 22 and Oct. 30.</p> <p>The apartment structure is scheduled for demolition.</p> <p>The live-fire training allows firefighters the opportunity to face real-life fire scenarios in a controlled setting, and the apartment structure allows enhanced complexity.</p> <p>The experience is also a part of a final evaluation of new recruits into what they have learned over 12 weeks of training, while focusing on fire attack, teamwork and communication.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Tech's biggest companies economy signals
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/26/technology/economy-facebook-google.html
GIST	<p>Google this week reported a steep decline in profits. Social media companies such as Meta said that advertising sales — the heart of their businesses — have rapidly cooled off. And Microsoft, perhaps the tech industry's most reliable performer, predicted a slowdown through at least the end of the year.</p> <p>Tech companies led the way for the U.S. economy over the past decade and buoyed the stock market during the worst days of the coronavirus pandemic. Now, amid stubborn inflation and rising interest rates, even the biggest giants of Silicon Valley are signaling that tough days may be ahead.</p> <p>The companies are navigating the same problems as the rest of the economy. Pumped up by aggressive consumer spending during the pandemic, they invested to keep up with demand. Now, as that spending is slowing, they're trying to adjust. It hasn't been easy.</p> <p>Amazon, which had 798,000 employees at the beginning of 2020, is reining in expansion of its warehousing operations, mothballing buildings, pulling out of leases and delaying plans to open facilities. The company employed 1.52 million people in the second quarter, almost 100,000 fewer than at the end of March.</p> <p>Most companies would love to have the problems of the tech industry's leaders. Between them, Google and Microsoft made \$31.5 billion in profits in their most recent quarter. On Thursday Apple is expected to say that it made more than \$20 billion in profits in a quarter that will otherwise be considered a disappointment.</p> <p>But their sudden slowdown is exposing a weakness. The big tech companies haven't really found a new, very profitable idea in years. Despite years of investment in new businesses, Google and Meta still rely mostly on ad sales. The iPhone, 15 years after it upended the industry, still drives Apple's profits.</p> <p>That has left some of them vulnerable to the disruptive upstarts that they once were. YouTube, which is owned by Google, and Meta's Facebook and Instagram social media platforms are being upended by the much younger TikTok. Meta said on Wednesday that its profit in the most recent quarter was down more than 50 percent from a year ago.</p>

The slowdown has been more severe among companies in young markets like crypto and the gig economy but also the more staid chip makers. The value of Bitcoin has plunged by two-thirds this year, dragging a host of start-ups down with it. Uber, the ride-hailing pioneer, has slashed spending as investors have lost their patience with unprofitable businesses.

Semiconductor companies are cutting spending on factories and machinery as sales of PCs, smartphones and appliances slow. Texas Instruments told financial analysts on Tuesday that the contagion is spreading to sales for things like heating controls and factory robots. Covid-related lockdowns in China and the growing threat of trade and technology restrictions have made things worse.

“We’re in for a dark winter,” said Brent Thill, a technology analyst with the investment firm Jefferies. “From small to big to large — no one is immune.”

Google and Microsoft assured investors this week that they would slow hiring and monitor rising energy and supply chain costs. Apple has said it plans to be more deliberate about how it expands its work force as the economy struggles.

Other companies are embarking on new strategies. Netflix, weakened by slowing subscription growth, hopes to revive its business next month with [the release of a lower-priced service](#) that is subsidized by ads.

Meta is pouring billions into the construction of a so-called metaverse, which it hopes will be tech’s next big thing. But that investment is costing the company a lot of money. Meta said its Reality Labs division, which is responsible for the virtual reality and augmented reality efforts that are central to the metaverse, had lost \$3.7 billion compared with \$2.6 billion a year earlier.

“Look I get that a lot of people might disagree with this investment,” Mark Zuckerberg, Meta’s chief executive, said on a call with financial analysts on Wednesday. “But from what I can tell, I think this is going to be a very important thing and I think it would be a mistake for us to not focus on any of these areas, which I think are going to be fundamentally important to the future.”

For nearly three years, tech companies ballooned as businesses sent workers home and schools shifted classes online. The fallout from Covid-19 played to the industry’s strengths.

Employees and students splurged on smartphones and computers. Businesses supported remote work by purchasing cloud storage and videoconferencing software. And people stuck at home resorted to online shopping, which forced small businesses to pour money into digital ads in hopes of snagging potential customers.

It is proving impossible for tech companies to maintain that growth. Smartphone and computer sales are slowing worldwide. Cloud computing spending is being scrutinized by businesses troubled by the slowing economy. Shoppers have returned to stores and started spending their money on travel, concerts and sporting events — the in-person moments they once sacrificed.

Apple is expected to report on Thursday that iPhone sales rose 7 percent for its fiscal year that ended in September, a sharp deceleration from the nearly 40 percent increase it posted last year. Wall Street analysts predict that sales will decline next year as customers in its two biggest markets, the United States and China, struggle with economic slowdowns.

A similar turnabout in computer sales threaten to compound Apple’s woes, as well as drag down its longtime rival, Microsoft. The computer market is deteriorating at its fastest rate in decades. The decline is hobbling Apple’s Mac business and led Microsoft to forecast a roughly 30 percent decline in Windows sales over the final months of this year.

	<p>“There were so many PCs purchased in the last two years that there’s no demand,” said Mikako Kitagawa, a technology analyst with Gartner, a market research firm. “Plus, hiring is frozen, so businesses don’t need new PCs.”</p> <p>Microsoft has shaken off sluggish computer sales before by leaning into the explosive growth of its cloud computing product, Azure. But that business has begun to soften as cloud customers look to reduce spending.</p> <p>Microsoft said on Tuesday that Azure sales increased 35 percent, a slowdown from earlier this year. Industry analysts expect Amazon, which reports earnings on Thursday, to also say that growth of its cloud computing business has slowed.</p> <p>The industry’s slackening started with a downturn in online advertising sales. The cracks in that business began to form early this year when Apple introduced privacy changes that made it harder for Meta and Snap to target their digital advertising. On Wednesday, Meta warned that it didn’t see any relief on the horizon to the declining ad market.</p> <p>“We’ve still got a ways to go,” said Steve Milunovich, a longtime Wall Street analyst who now consults for technology companies. “This reset is overdue.”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/26 Signs of a ‘tripledeemic’
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/26/briefing/signs-of-a-tripledeemic.html
GIST	<p>This winter, the U.S. could be in for a “tripledeemic,” a nasty collision of three viruses — the flu, the coronavirus and respiratory syncytial virus (R.S.V.) — which could cause a surge of patients seeking treatment at hospitals that are already stretched thin.</p> <p>To understand how the next few months might play out, I turned to my colleague Apoorva Mandavilli, who covers infectious diseases.</p> <p>Let’s look ahead to the winter. How is Covid shaping up in the U.S.?</p> <p>At the moment the rates are low, but we know that a winter wave is coming. Many European countries already are having waves and we generally tend to follow them. There’s almost no doubt that we will see something, it’s just a matter of how big it will be.</p> <p>At the moment, it looks like the two variants that we probably need to worry about the most are BQ.1.1 and XBB, both of which are variations of Omicron, and both seem able to get around immunity pretty well, at least in terms of infection.</p> <p>Tell me more.</p> <p>BQ.1.1 and its close relative, BQ.1, together now account for about 17 percent of cases. So they’ve gone up really fast — their doubling time seems to be around one week. Those are the variants that have driven up cases in European countries.</p> <p>XBB just arrived here and it’s circulating at a low rate. But in Singapore, where a huge percentage of the population is vaccinated and has immunity, it caused a fairly big wave. So it seems really adept at getting around immunity. When it starts to get around here, it probably will also drive up cases. But at the moment BQ.1.1 is the leading candidate for a potential winter wave because it had a head start.</p> <p>Do either of these new variants cause more severe disease?</p> <p>That doesn’t seem to be the case. There are only a couple of new variants that cause more severe disease — BA.2.75 and the closely related BA.2.75.2 — but fortunately they are still at a low prevalence in the U.S., at under 3 percent of total cases.</p> <p>At this point in time, what really gives a variant a competitive advantage is to be able to get around immunity, because so many of us have all kinds of protection — from multiple doses of vaccines or</p>

multiple infections or both. So there's a lot of pressure on the virus to evolve its way around that immunity.

How well are the updated boosters working against these variants?

So far it looks like they should still be fairly protective against severe disease and death. We are not seeing huge numbers of deaths in the U.K. and other European countries. They are seeing a rise in hospitalizations, but that might be unvaccinated people, or immunocompromised people, or people who haven't had a booster in a while.

Switching gears, how is flu season shaping up?

We always look at how the flu season has gone in the southern hemisphere before we try to predict what will happen here. And this year, Australia and New Zealand were just walloped. So that's not a good sign. Already we are seeing something like a 3 percent positivity rate for flu tests in the U.S., which is higher than usual for this time of year.

However, the vaccine is actually a decent match for the flu variants that are circulating. It should offer a significant amount of protection. So doctors are really urging people to go get the flu shot. It's the same as with the Covid vaccines. Even if it doesn't prevent infection, you won't get as sick — your symptoms will be milder and they won't last as long.

What is R.S.V., and what do we need to know about it?

It's a respiratory virus that is a significant cause of respiratory problems in young kids. And Covid has made it act in a strange way. Normally you see R.S.V. in the winter, but the U.K. and the U.S. saw R.S.V. waves in the spring and the summer — really off season, strange behavior. Right now, doctors I have been talking to are saying that their wards are already filling up with kids who have R.S.V. in particular.

And here's the thing, really little kids just don't have as much immunity to these viruses because some were born after the pandemic started and they've never been exposed to the viruses. Or they were really young and had not built up a lot of immunity before the pandemic started. So now when their bodies are exposed to these viruses, their symptoms are more severe than they otherwise would have been. Currently there is no vaccine for R.S.V., but there are some in clinical trials.

So how should we approach the “triple-demic”?

Get vaccinated. There's a good vaccine for flu, and there is an OK vaccine for Covid in terms of the new variants, and it will give you some protection. Wear a mask if you are able. Wash your hands often and do not go to work or to school if you are sick.

I have not yet gone to get a Covid booster, but now that I know that these variants are picking up so quickly, I do plan to get one. I'll probably try to time it to get the most protection for a trip to go see my parents later this year.

At an individual level, especially if you are relatively healthy, none of those viruses is a big threat to you necessarily, but it is a threat to our health care system, which is already so stretched. And it is a threat to children and pregnant women and older people who may end up in the hospital. If they get really sick, they may not be able to get care because the hospitals are already full.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Putin fuels fear: repeats 'dirty bomb' claim
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/26/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#putin-dirty-bomb-disinformation
GIST	President Vladimir V. Putin on Wednesday repeated Russia's unsubstantiated warning that Ukraine was preparing to explode a so-called dirty bomb , as concerns rose in the West that the Kremlin was seeking a pretext to escalate its war in Ukraine.

Mr. Putin joined the chorus of senior Russian officials who have claimed in recent days — without providing evidence — that Ukraine planned to detonate a dirty bomb, which uses conventional explosives to spread radioactive material. It was the first time the Russian leader made the claim, which Western officials have dismissed, suggesting Moscow could use it as a pretext for launching its own attack.

At the same time, the Russian military conducted an annual exercise involving land, sea and air field tests of its missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

State television broadcast short clips of the launches as well as an excerpt from Mr. Putin receiving a briefing from Russia's defense minister, Sergei K. Shoigu, saying that the tests had been successful.

Russia informed the United States of the test beforehand as stipulated by disarmament treaties, U.S. officials have said. U.S. officials said that Russia's annual strategic exercises started Wednesday morning and that they appeared routine, "with all customary notifications in place."

But Mr. Putin's claim, coupled with the military exercises, added to the concerns of a possible escalation of the war in Ukraine, a day after President Biden [warned Mr. Putin](#) that it would be "an incredibly serious mistake" to use a tactical nuclear weapon in the conflict.

A dirty bomb is not a nuclear device, but Mr. Biden's warning reflected the increasingly urgent concern in Washington and among Western allies that Russia may be searching for a pretext to unleash a tactical nuclear weapon.

On Wednesday, [in a video address](#) to a conference of intelligence chiefs from heads of the security agencies from former Soviet states, Mr. Putin accused Washington of supplying Ukraine with "heavy weapons" and said that the risk of conflict was high in the region and around the world. Security should be heightened around key infrastructure sites, he said.

"It is also known about plans to use a so-called dirty bomb for provocation," a Kremlin summary of the message quoted Mr. Putin as saying.

Russia has not made public any evidence to substantiate its dirty bomb accusation against Ukraine.

Antony J. Blinken, the U.S. secretary of state, said Wednesday during a public talk at the Bloomberg News bureau in Washington that the United States continued to watch for any moves by Russia to escalate the war in Ukraine, including with nuclear weapons.

"We haven't seen a reason to change our own nuclear posture," Mr. Blinken said. "But it's something we're tracking very carefully, and we've also communicated directly and very clearly to the Russians, to President Putin, about the consequences" that would follow from "any use of a nuclear device."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Official: CIA director visited Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/26/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#the-cia-director-visited-ukraine-this-month
GIST	<p>The C.I.A. director traveled to Ukraine earlier this month to meet with Ukrainian intelligence officials and President Volodymyr Zelensky, according to a U.S. official.</p> <p>William J. Burns, the C.I.A. director, was in Kyiv, the capital, to discuss the United States' continued intelligence cooperation with Ukraine, and reinforce Washington's support in the war against Russia, the official said. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the director's travel, which is kept secret.</p>

	<p>American intelligence has been critical to helping the Ukrainians target Russian arms depots behind the front lines, attack command and control nodes, and find weaknesses in Russian defenses that Kyiv has exploited in its counterattacks.</p> <p>It is not clear how many trips to Ukraine Mr. Burns has made, although he traveled to Kyiv immediately before the invasion with a stark warning to Mr. Zelensky to shore up the defenses of the capital.</p> <p>That trip, officials have said previously, helped the Ukrainians improve their defenses at the nearby Hostomel airport and repel an attack by elite Russian airborne troops.</p> <p>There have been some tensions between Ukraine and the United States over Kyiv's covert attacks inside Russia and its strikes in Crimea, the peninsula Moscow illegally annexed from Ukraine in 2014. Some American officials believe the covert campaign is a distraction from the effective Ukrainian counterattack in the south and northeast.</p> <p>Still, despite those tensions, American officials have said that cooperation with Ukraine continues and that relationships between senior American leaders and their Ukrainian counterparts remain strong.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/26 Clash: anti-transgender rally in Tacoma
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article267901542.html
GIST	<p>A rally held by a British anti-transgender activist and her supporters dissolved into shouting and pepper spray Wednesday at Tacoma's Tollefson Plaza.</p> <p>Kellie-Jay Keen, who goes by the pseudonym Posie Parker, is on a speaking tour in the United States, supporters told The News Tribune. She's the head of a group, Standing for Women, which says it supports free speech and women's sex-based rights.</p> <p>It is virulently anti-transgender Keen spoke to about 30 supporters at the late-morning rally. Initially, about 20 counter-protesters stood above the plaza.</p> <p>Counter-protesters soon grew to at least 200 and descended into the plaza. Keen left the rally before many of her supporters did.</p> <p>Port Townsend-based Standing for Women activist Amy Sousa attended the rally and called herself pro-woman.</p> <p>"We don't believe there's like a million different identities," Sousa said. "There's gender flux and demiboy and alien girl and cat gender. So we don't believe in any of that."</p> <p>One protester held a sign that read "Trans 'women' are men."</p> <p>"We peaceably assembled for our free speech," Sousa said. "And we were mobbed by this group of mostly angry children."</p> <p>Nearby was Jeanna Hoch, who was arguing with a group of young counter-protesters. Seconds earlier she had sprayed a counter-protester in the face with pepper spray.</p> <p>Hoch said the counter-protester had touched her. She screamed, "Do not touch me," over and over as she backed up a hill. Down slope the counter-protester sat on grass, writhing in pain. A volunteer medic who declined to be identified said they treated at least five other protesters for pepper spray.</p> <p>Hoch, a Denver resident, said she was spit at and pushed. She said she had been assaulted Tuesday at a rally in Portland.</p>

	<p>“I was prepared for the violence,” Hoch said.</p> <p>One protester’s hand was injured and required medical treatment, Hoch said.</p> <p>Counter-protesters Katy Evans and Sweet Pea Flaherty offered comfort to the young counter-protesters, many who appeared to be Tacoma School of the Arts students. Several required water to flush their eyes.</p> <p>“It felt scarier at the beginning,” Evans said. “But their numbers did not increase, and Tacoma showed up.” Counter-protesters surrounded the rally participants with noise.</p> <p>“Just trying to drown out their message and then make them feel like it was time to leave,” Evans said.</p> <p>One counter-protester sprayed the rally with Silly String. Hoch responded with pepper spray and hit a different nearby counter-protester, Lorenzo Cervantes, in the face with the painful liquid.</p> <p>“They used violent tactics,” Cervantes said later. “(Hoch) came prepared to hurt somebody. We weren’t hurting anybody.”</p> <p>Tacoma Police spokesperson Wendy Haddow said one person reported a cell phone was taken from their hand and smashed on the ground at the rally, which resulted in a suspect’s arrest for simple assault and malicious mischief.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Fired PCSD deputy gets \$400K but not job
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article267702502.html
GIST	<p>Pierce County recently paid a six-figure settlement to a former sheriff’s deputy who alleged text messages about his firing in 2019 had been destroyed, closing the book on his bid to get his job back following his acquittal on domestic violence charges.</p> <p>Ex-Sgt. Pat Davidson’s three-year legal struggle across multiple cases also ensnared his daughter, who was fired from the Sheriff’s Department after prosecutors said she lied under oath and withheld evidence regarding her father. Last month, an arbitrator concluded the department didn’t prove Brittney Davidson lied and ordered her reinstatement with more than a year of back pay.</p> <p>In a statement, the Sheriff’s Department stood by its investigations of the Davidsons and subsequent disciplinary decisions.</p> <p>“We were trying to do our part to hold deputies accountable,” spokesperson Sgt. Darren Moss told The News Tribune over the phone.</p> <p>Moss said the Sheriff’s Department is calculating the back pay owed to Brittney Davidson based on her salary and average overtime. Entry-level deputy salaries are advertised at a minimum of about \$77,000.</p> <p>The Pierce County Council approved a \$400,000 payment to settle Pat Davidson’s lawsuit during a September meeting.</p> <p>Pat Davidson told The News Tribune he was searching for documents to file a wrongful termination lawsuit last year when public records officials informed him former Sheriff Paul Pastor’s texts had been destroyed when he retired in September 2020. Another department leader’s texts were destroyed when he received a new phone but after Davidson’s records request.</p> <p>State public records retention rules require local government agencies to save most internal and external communications for at least two years. State law mandates that records related to reasonably anticipated litigation and existing public records requests must not be destroyed.</p>

When Davidson sued the county for public records violations and wrongful termination this spring, he said he still hoped to get his job back. He currently works as a security guard and has been unable to secure another law enforcement job.

"I didn't do it. I've been with my wife for 30 years," Davidson told The News Tribune in August. "I was fired before being given due process." Davidson previously settled a lawsuit against the sheriff's union and an affiliated attorney, alleging they failed to properly represent him during the termination grievance process.

Davidson said the union agreed to pay him \$150,000 in December. The settlement terms with the attorney were confidential.

SHERIFF'S SERGEANT CHARGED, FIRED

Prosecutors charged Davidson with unlawful imprisonment and two counts of misdemeanor assault in late September 2019, alleging he hit and used a chokehold on his wife during an argument about a month earlier.

A family friend filed a police report after Davidson's wife confided in others at a bachelorette party that a fight with Davidson the night before had left her with significant bruises, according to investigative documents. Davidson's wife reportedly said she couldn't breathe from the chokehold and thought she was going to die.

When interviewed by Pierce County detectives, Davidson's wife downplayed the incident and her comments to friends, police documents show. She said it was not domestic violence; she was drunk and they were wrestling.

Davidson's daughter also attended the bachelorette party, where she talked with her mother about the incident, according to police documents. Brittney Davidson's then-boyfriend, a fellow deputy, attended the corresponding bachelor party and also heard about the incident with Pat Davidson.

Both deputies spoke with Sheriff's Department detectives, according to investigative documents. Brittney Davidson said at the time she didn't have photos of her mother from that day.

About two weeks later, prosecutors charged Pat Davidson.

Two days after that, the Sheriff's Department sent him a notice of intent to terminate his employment, according to court documents.

The prosecutor's office then added Pat Davidson to a list of law enforcement officers with credibility issues, known as potential impeachment evidence or Brady list, in early October, according to court documents. Prosecutors are required to provide that information to defense attorneys.

Pastor decided to fire Davidson in late October, prior to trial, citing department policy on law violations.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TRIAL, AFTERMATH

Davidson was scheduled to face trial in December 2019, but a few days before new evidence came to light: His daughter found a selfie she'd taken with her mother on the night of the August bachelorette party.

Brittney Davidson wasn't sure what to do with the photo and asked her father, whose attorneys provided the image to prosecutors, according to arbitration documents. The photo didn't show any bruising.

While discussing the photo over the phone with deputy prosecuting attorney Coreen Schnepf, Brittney Davidson said she and her mother were drunk when they talked about the incident and it affected her memory when talking to detectives, according to arbitration documents. Schnepf told the arbitrator she didn't record or take notes about the conversation.

A jury found Pat Davidson not guilty on all counts in late February 2020.

About a month later, Pastor denied his request to be reinstated, court documents say.

Around the same time, county officials began scrutinizing Brittney Davidson and her then-boyfriend, who both testified during the trial. Schnepf said testimony from Davidson was inconsistent with her prior statements to detectives.

On the stand, Brittney Davidson said her mother could be untruthful when she drinks and admitted to being the aggressor during the August argument with Pat Davidson, which was prompted by a TV remote, according to arbitration documents.

“The statement did not match what she told us,” said Sheriff’s Department spokesperson Sgt. Darren Moss.

The Sheriff’s Department put Brittney Davidson on administrative leave and launched an internal investigation about two weeks after the jury’s verdict, according to arbitration documents. She and her then-boyfriend received 20-hour suspensions in March 2021 for failing to report the incident between the Davidson couple.

Brittney Davidson also was added to the county prosecutor’s so-called Brady list.

The Attorney General’s Office declined to charge her or her then-boyfriend with perjury in May 2021, but the Sheriff’s Department fired Brittney Davidson the following month, citing a policy violation for untruthfulness under oath, according to arbitration documents. Her then-boyfriend did not receive additional discipline.

She hired attorney Brett Purtzer, who had also defended her father, to represent her during arbitration with the county after the sheriff’s union declined to pay for a lawyer.

Last month, an arbitrator found Brittney Davidson only violated department policy by sending the selfie with her mother to her father, a criminal defendant, prior to his trial, according to arbitration documents. Her discipline was lowered from termination to a 40-hour suspension deducted from her back pay award.

“The Department has picked isolated pieces of testimony to allege that Grievant violated the Truthfulness Policy,” the arbitrator wrote. “When the evidence is considered in context, and not by picking isolated statements from the record, it is apparent that Grievant was answering questions during the investigation and subsequently testifying at trial, to the best of her recall.”

Brittney Davidson has declined to speak with news media out of fear of retaliation, Pat Davidson said.

Although she was reinstated on Sept. 23 and returned to patrol duties on Oct. 14, her name remained on the prosecutor’s Brady list as of last week.

“Brittney should no longer be on there,” Purtzer told The News Tribune. “It’s pretty damning to any law enforcement officer to be on that list.”

DAVIDSON SETTLES FOR PAYOUT

Unlike his daughter, the merits of Pat Davidson’s case for reinstatement couldn’t be considered by an arbitrator.

In September 2020, an arbitrator found Davidson and the union had failed to timely appeal his firing after a human resources official upheld it in December 2019, according to court documents. Davidson tried to appeal that ruling to Pierce County Superior Court, but the county argued the arbitrator’s decision was final.

In his wrongful termination and public records lawsuit against the county, Davidson blamed the union for missing the deadline to appeal his firing, alleging a guild attorney advised he wait to appeal until after his trial.

During research for that lawsuit, in spring 2021, Davidson filed a public records requests for any text messages department top brass sent about him.

A public records official told Davidson that former Sheriff Pastor's texts had been destroyed when he retired, court documents show. Text messages from chief of investigations Kevin Roberts were destroyed when he got a new phone about a month after Davidson's request.

In subsequent court papers, the county argued Davidson had exhausted his options to get his job back and moved to dismiss his wrongful termination claim. The filing did not address the public records allegations.

Davidson and the county agreed to a settlement before a judge ruled.

As a part of the settlement, Davidson said he would withdraw his public records requests at issue.

He told The News Tribune he plans to refile some of them later. "I wanted to find out why" Pastor upheld his firing, Davidson said. "And I'm not going to get that because they destroyed it."

Last year, Pierce County implemented a system to archive text messages within its email database, according to spokesperson Libby Catalinich. Text messaging is disabled for any county cellphone users who opt out of that process.

Joan Mell, Davidson's attorney, questioned why the county didn't have a retention policy in place prior to her filing a lawsuit. "There's no reason they should be paying Pat Davidson anything," Mell said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Young adults heart attacks jumped sharply
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/heart-attack-deaths-jumped-sharply-among-young-us-adults-in-2nd-year-of-covid-pandemic/
GIST	<p>As the number of COVID-19 infection surged during the pandemic, deaths from heart attacks rose sharply as well, with adults ages 25-44 experiencing the most significant increases, according to new research from scientists at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles.</p> <p>"The dramatic rise in heart attacks during the pandemic has reversed what was a prior decadelong steady improvement in cardiac deaths," said Dr. Yee Hui Yeo, first author of the study and a Cedars-Sinai physician-scientist. "We are still learning the many ways by which COVID-19 affects the body, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or race."</p> <p>Scientists around the nation and world continue to release findings that show SARS-CoV-2 infections increase risk of other serious conditions such as stroke, nerve damage and some autoimmune diseases.</p> <p>While other infections such as the flu are known to lead to a slightly increased risk of heart attacks, the Cedars-Sinai researchers said, they could find nothing that compared with the jump in deaths linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. Among their findings published in the peer-reviewed "Journal of Medical Virology":</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• U.S. deaths attributed to heart attacks, or acute myocardial infarctions as they are medically known, shot up 14% to 164,096 in the first year of the pandemic, April 1, 2020, to Mar 31, 2021.• By the second year of the pandemic, the dramatic increases in heart attacks blew apart the models used to predict how many people would lose their lives to these events. Fatal heart attacks among adults ages 25-44 soared 29.9% over what was predicted. Deaths from heart attack climbed by 19.6% for adults ages 45-64 and by 13.7% for ages 65 and older.

- These excessively higher rates of heart attack-related death have persisted throughout the pandemic, the Cedars-Sinai researchers found, including the possibility that COVID-19 could trigger or accelerate coronary artery disease. The scientists said more research has to be done to pinpoint risks.

“There is something very different about how this virus affects the cardiac risks,” said Dr. Susan Cheng, director of the Institute for Research on Healthy Aging in the Department of Cardiology at the Smidt Heart Institute and senior and co-corresponding author of the study. “The difference is likely due to a combination of stress and inflammation, arising from predisposing factors and the way this virus biologically interacts with the cardiovascular system.”

Certainly, Cheng and the other researchers said, behavioral health challenges associated with the pandemic — job losses, isolation, the unexpected deaths of relatives, or other pressures — can also cause acute or chronic stress leading to cardiac disease.

Because of this increased risk of stress, many Americans have fallen out of the habit of exercising and may have skipped medical check-ups that could detect problems, said a separate team of Cedars-Sinai researchers who reported in August that COVID-19 was linked to an increase risk of stroke.

Individuals who were vaccinated were 200 times less likely to have a stroke after having COVID. Those who had severe cases of COVID-19 were at a much greater risk of experiencing inflammation, blood clots and heart disease.

Dr. Nancy Sicotte, chair of the Department of Neurology and the Women’s Guild Distinguished Chair in Neurology at Cedars-Sinai, strongly recommended vaccines for individuals in high-risk groups. This includes those who have lung or cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, a prior stroke, people who are immunocompromised, and individuals 65 and older.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Police departments face staffing shortages
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/these-police-departments-seeing-some-worst-staffing-shortages-us-ahead-2023
GIST	<p>Police departments across the country have grappled with staffing shortages, from small towns in North Carolina and Minnesota to big cities on either coast.</p> <p>National Police Association spokesperson Ret. Sgt. Betsy Branter Smith pointed to eleven cities that have experienced severe staffing issues after the anti-police rhetoric of 2020 and its political fallout: New York City; Chicago; Los Angeles; Philadelphia; Seattle; St. Louis; Louisville, Kentucky; Austin and San Antonio, Texas; and Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona.</p> <p>"I think this could be a generational problem," Branter-Smith said when asked how long she expects the staffing issues to last. "This could go on for years. Even if, let's say, I could flip a magic switch tomorrow, and everyone loved the police and every kid in America wanted to be a cop ... it takes nine months to a year from the date of hire for a person to become a police officer. So, there's one problem. Even if we could fix this tomorrow, it'll be a year before any of those staffing issues are addressed."</p> <p>The Seattle Police Department lost 400 officers between 2020 and 2022, and the city's number of deployable officers dropped to 954 this year — the city's lowest police population in 30 years, according to Mayor Bruce Harrell. The city has also seen a 40% decrease in detectives available for investigative work and an increase in overtime expenses.</p> <p>Washington State Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) President Marco Montebianco told Fox News Digital police have seen a 20% staffing reduction throughout the profession, and 86% of Washington State agencies are "experiencing some sort of staffing shortage."</p>

"When you add to the realization that [Washington state](#) already ranks at the bottom of police officers per thousand residents in this country, you can see why crime rates have skyrocketed. Homicide rates are at their highest rates in recorded history in many cities," Montebianco said.

"Experts will debate the root cause of this, but the [FOP] has stated before how the demonization of our profession by some politicians has negatively affected the rank-and-file officers throughout this country, and the failure to hold career criminals accountable for their actions has frustrated our officers who sacrifice their lives every day to protect the citizens they serve."

Harrell introduced a recruitment plan over the summer, including financial incentives, to encourage potential new hires to apply.

On the other coast, more than 4,000 [New York City](#) police officers are slated to leave the NYPD by the end of 2022, according to The New York Post. Some of those officers will retire before their full pensions take effect.

"We keep ringing the alarm bell louder and louder, and every month the numbers get worse. We have gone from a staffing problem to a staffing crisis and, now, to a full-blown staffing emergency," Patrick Lynch, president of the New York City Police Benevolent Association (NYC PBA) told Fox News Digital in a statement. "The city must immediately address the low pay and punishing work schedules that are driving cops out."

In Chicago, the number of active-duty officers has been [steadily decreasing since 2017](#), according to data obtained by Fox News Digital in April. The Louisville Police Department was about 300 officers short of its total complement of officers in July, with about 100 officers eligible for retirement, according to WHAS11. Phoenix was short more than 500 officers in July, KPNX reported at the time.

[St. Louis and the surrounding area](#) of Jefferson County are experiencing similar staffing issues. The Jefferson County Sheriff's Office issued a warning on Facebook in September after a deputy sheriff resigned, opting for a new job "in the civilian world" he said he accepted for a better quality of life for him and his son.

"We ask that you please support your police," the sheriff's office said in a Facebook post, along with a copy of the deputy sheriff's resignation letter. "(Officers) locally and around the country are leaving the profession at an alarming rate. This resignation letter today is another example of what we are seeing. It's not sustainable."

Branter-Smith, who travels the U.S. to meet with police leaders and help train officers, was in St. Louis when she spoke with Fox News Digital.

"We had a big school shooting here in St. Louis. And what did the St. Louis Police Department — who is horrifically short-staffed and one of the most vilified police departments in the country — what did they do? Ran toward the shots, got up to the third floor, killed the shooter, took care of business, rescued all these kids," Branter-Smith said. "Their response was just textbook."

Branter-Smith then took aim at [Democratic Missouri Rep. Cori Bush](#), who pushed the "defund police" narrative in 2020. Bush thanked first responders in a statement following the shooting, but Branter-Smith said the congresswoman's support for police needs to be stronger than a one-time thank-you.

"That has to stop," Branter-Smith said. "Every single jurisdiction from the tiniest town or county to the biggest of cities is going to have to basically start a marketing campaign to get police officers. They're going to have to stop [the anti-cop rhetoric](#). They're going to have to stop the anti-cop actions."

Staffing shortages mean longer shifts for officers and increased overtime pay for taxpayers, slower responses to 911 calls and mental health crises and an unhappy public, low morale among officers who are

	<p>overworked and underappreciated and a general imbalance of crime versus available officers, Brantner-Smith said.</p> <p>The former officer pointed to slashed police department funding, progressive prosecutorial policies and incentives — or a lack thereof — as some of the reasons departments are struggling to hire new officers and keep current officers.</p> <p>What can be done to attract new officers to these cities and small towns experiencing similar issues?</p> <p>Brantner-Smith suggested support for police from both politicians and their communities, more funding, financial and other hiring incentives, strong leadership and effective training. She also believes prosecutors need to be more diligent in determining which suspects can be released into the public without posing a threat to their communities so that officer morale does not continue to drop.</p> <p>"I did it for 29 years," Brantner-Smith said when asked what she would say to those who might consider becoming police officers. "I never had the same day twice. I get to do everything from arresting robbers and murderers to delivering babies. It is the best job on the planet, I think."</p> <p>Washington FOP President Montebianco said, "Officers who do not feel supported are not going to stay," and agencies "will not get anyone to take this job regardless of the benefits."</p> <p>"What we can do is make sure that our officers are paid accordingly, have proper time off to reenergize, the ability to have proper training and address long-term benefits with our pensions," he explained. "Most importantly, a general change in the climate towards us in the media and with many of our politicians would make the most impact on overall moral."</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/26 Putin monitors nuclear forces strike drills
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/putin-monitors-drills-nuclear-forces-russia/
GIST	<p>Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday monitored drills of the country's strategic nuclear forces involving multiple practice launches of ballistic and cruise missiles in a show of force amid the heightened tensions with the West over the conflict in Ukraine.</p> <p>Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu reported to Putin that the exercise was intended to simulate a "massive nuclear strike" by Russia in retaliation for a nuclear attack on Russia.</p> <p>The maneuvers followed Putin's warning about his readiness to use "all means available" to fend off attacks on Russia's territory in a clear reference to the country's nuclear arsenals.</p> <p>During Wednesday's drills, a Yars land-based intercontinental ballistic missile was test-fired from the northern Plesetsk launch site. A Russian nuclear submarine in the Barents Sea launched a Sineva ICBM at the Kura firing range on the far-eastern Kamchatka Peninsula.</p> <p>As part of the exercise, Tu-95 strategic bombers also launched cruise missiles at practice targets.</p> <p>The Kremlin said in a statement that all tasks set for the exercise were fulfilled and all the missiles that were test-fired reached their designated targets.</p> <p>Such maneuvers involving land, sea and air components of the Russian nuclear triad have taken place on an annual basis to train the country's nuclear forces and demonstrate their readiness.</p> <p>The Biden administration said Tuesday that Russia gave notice it intended to stage routine drills of its nuclear capabilities. The Pentagon and U.S. State Department said Russia had complied with the terms of the last U.S.-Russia arms control agreement in notifying Washington of the upcoming tests.</p>

	<p>The last time Russia held a nuclear exercise was in February, just ahead of its invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>The Russian nuclear exercise comes amid Moscow's warnings of a purported Ukrainian plot to detonate a radioactive device commonly known as a "dirty bomb" in a false flag attack to blame Russia.</p> <p>Putin himself repeated the dirty bomb claim on Wednesday. "We know about the plans to use the so-called dirty bomb for provocations," he said.</p> <p>Shoigu, the Russian defense ministry, also called his Chinese and Indian counterparts Wednesday to discuss the allegation, which Ukraine and its Western allies have strongly rejected.</p> <p>The Ukrainian government has said it suspects Russia is planning its own false flag operation.</p> <p>Authorities in Poland, Ukraine's western neighbor, said they were closely watching Russia's movements to prepare for the potential use of nuclear or chemical weapons.</p> <p>Deputy Defense Minister Marcin Ociepa charged the Kremlin "may reach for nuclear or chemical weapons" in the face of military setbacks in Ukraine.</p> <p>No one has ever used tactical nuclear weapons — sometimes referred to as "small nukes" — in combat. Both the U.S. and the Soviet Union developed them early on during the Cold War as a method of deterrence. The NATO allies had them in Europe as part of their "flexible response" strategy to show the Soviet Union and its allies that any conflict, even one with conventional weapons, could have nuclear consequences.</p> <p>The most recent public U.S. intelligence estimates Russia has up to 2,000 tactical nuclear weapons in its stockpiles. The U.S., on the other hand, has slightly more than 200.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/26 India pushback Russia 'dirty bomb' claim
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/putin-partner-in-india-shuts-down-russias-claim-ukraine-plans-to-use-dirty-bomb?ref=home
GIST	<p>Russia is now taking its claim that Kyiv is preparing to use a dirty bomb in Ukraine as an act of provocation to some of Moscow's closest partners in India and China, in an apparent attempt to shore up support. But the presentation has fallen flat.</p> <p>Russia's defense minister, Sergei Shoigu, made the case to India's defense minister, Rajnath Singh, in recent hours during a phone call, according to India's defense ministry. Shoigu expressed concerns that Ukraine may be preparing to use a dirty bomb, a combination of conventional explosives and radioactive material, claiming that it's intended to provoke Russia.</p> <p>But Singh wasn't having any of it. Singh told Shoigu "the nuclear option should not be resorted to" in the war, according to a readout from India's defense ministry. "The prospect of the usage of nuclear or radiological weapons goes against the basic tenets of humanity."</p> <p>Singh "reiterated India's position on the need to pursue the path of dialogue and diplomacy for an early resolution of the conflict."</p> <p>India's warning about the dirty bomb claims echoed western allies' rejection of Russia's allegations, which Shoigu began shopping around to leaders over the weekend without providing any evidence. The United States, U.K., and France issued a rare joint statement following Shoigu's campaign, labeling his claims as "transparently false allegations."</p>

The dirty bomb claim has caused alarm throughout the globe, raising concerns that Russian President Vladimir Putin might be interested in using the allegation as a way to claim justification for further escalation in the war in Ukraine.

India's apparent attempt to convince Russia that cooler heads should prevail is the latest sign that some of Putin's support is drying up. The pushback from India, which has typically been one of Russia's closer partners on the world stage and is a top recipient of Russian arms, may be a signal that India isn't pleased with the way Russia is carrying out the war in Ukraine and may be trying to distance itself from the conquest. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi rebuked Putin publicly just last month, telling him that now is not the time for war. The resistance comes as two of Putin's closest war hawks in Russia are increasingly pushing back on his war plans, too.

Shoigu also attempted to make his case to China Wednesday, speaking over video teleconference with China's Minister of National Defense, Wei Fenghe, according to TASS. China has not responded to the call yet, according to Reuters, but Chinese President Xi Jinping has previously been perturbed by Russia's approach to the war in Ukraine, according to a CIA analysis, and has recently informed Putin of "concerns" about the war.

Putin has only seemed to double down on his claims, however.

"We know about the plans to use the so-called dirty bomb for provocations," Putin said Wednesday, according to the AP.

Ukraine's government has accused Russia of preparing dirty bombs itself, and has requested that authorities from the International Atomic Energy Agency investigate nuclear facilities to check that radioactive material hasn't been dedicated for a dirty bomb. The IAEA has agreed to conduct such "verification activities."

Ukrainian officials and North Atlantic Treaty Organization Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg have noted that if Russia is accusing someone else of something, they very well may be preparing to do it themselves.

"NATO allies reject this transparently false allegation," Stoltenberg said Monday. "Russia often accuses others of what they intend to do themselves. We have seen this pattern before from Syria to Ukraine."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky suggested Russia is already likely working behind the scenes on a dirty bomb.

"If Russia calls and says that Ukraine is allegedly preparing something, it means one thing: Russia has already prepared all this," Zelensky said in a nightly address this week.

The State Department warned, too, that Russia might be plotting.

"The Russians have accused the Ukrainians, the Russians have accused other countries, of what it itself was planning. That is our concern," spokesperson Ned Price said Monday.

President Joe Biden warned earlier this week that it would be "an incredibly serious mistake" for Russia to use a tactical nuclear weapon.

Biden clarified that it's not clear if Russia is preparing to use a dirty bomb as part of a false flag operation.

Russia's Defense Ministry has put its forces in a "state of readiness for action" if a situation of radioactive contamination arises, the Chief of Russia's Radiation, Chemical and Biological Protection Troops, Lieutenant-General Igor Kirillov, claimed Monday, according to TASS.

	<p>The flurry of concern over Russia’s dirty bomb allegations and lobbying campaign comes just as Russia is conducting annual drills on launching ballistic and cruise missiles. The tests are intended to practice a “massive nuclear strike” in retaliation for a nuclear attack on Russia.</p> <p>There is no evidence that Putin is preparing an attack, though, and the United States hasn’t seen anything from Russia that would cause the Biden administration to change the strategic forces posture, according to the Department of Defense.</p> <p>“We have not seen at this time... any indication that Russia has made a decision or intends to employ nuclear weapons or a dirty bomb,” Pentagon Press Secretary Gen. Pat Ryder told reporters in a briefing Tuesday. “But again, it’s something that we’ll continue to watch closely.”</p> <p>Last month, when the IAEA visited nuclear facilities in Ukraine, “no undeclared nuclear activities or material were found,” IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi said.</p> <p>The Biden Administration has warned that there will be repercussions for Russia if it deploys a dirty bomb or another nuclear weapon.</p> <p>“There would be consequences for Russia, whether it uses a nuclear weapon or a dirty bomb,” Ryder said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Ebola contagion fears grow in Uganda
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/ebola-infects-schoolkids-uganda-contagion-fear-grows-92123240
GIST	<p>KAMPALA, Uganda -- Six schoolchildren in Uganda’s capital have tested positive for Ebola, the health minister said Wednesday, marking a serious escalation of the outbreak declared just over a month ago.</p> <p>The children, who attend three different schools in Kampala, are among at least 15 people in the city confirmed to have been infected with Ebola, according to a statement by Health Minister Jane Ruth Aceng.</p> <p>The children are members of a family exposed to the disease by a man who traveled from one Ebola-hit district, sought treatment in Kampala and died there, the statement said.</p> <p>“He is responsible for infecting the family of seven, including the neighbors and many others,” the statement said, speaking of the traveling Ebola patient. “We were able to get this cluster, plus one other, because of the ministry’s vigilance in contact tracing and field case management.”</p> <p>Authorities are “following up” 170 contacts from schools the six children attend, it said.</p> <p>Fears that Ebola could spread far from the outbreak’s epicenter compelled authorities to impose an ongoing lockdown, including nighttime curfews, on two of the five districts reporting Ebola cases on Oct. 16. The measures were put in place after a man infected with Ebola traveled to Kampala and died there, becoming the city’s first confirmed Ebola case.</p> <p>Tracing contacts is key to stemming the spread of contagious diseases like Ebola.</p> <p>The head of the Uganda Medical Association on Tuesday urged health authorities to impose a lockdown in Kampala, a stringent measure that the country’s president has previously said he doesn’t want to implement.</p> <p>That official, Dr. Samuel Oledo, told reporters the situation was alarming because some “people are not even reporting cases” of Ebola.</p>

	<p>Ebola, which manifests as a viral hemorrhagic fever, has infected 109 people and killed 30 since Sept. 20, when the outbreak was declared several days after the disease began spreading in a rural community in central Uganda.</p> <p>Ugandan health officials in the district of Mubende, the epicenter, were not quick to confirm Ebola partly because the disease's symptoms can mimic those of the more prevalent malaria.</p> <p>Ebola is spread by contact with bodily fluids of an infected person or contaminated materials. Symptoms include fever, vomiting, diarrhea, muscle pain and, at times, internal and external bleeding.</p> <p>There is no proven vaccine for the Sudan strain of Ebola that's circulating in this East African country of 45 million people.</p> <p>Uganda has had multiple Ebola outbreaks, including one in 2000 that killed more than 200 people. The 2014-16 Ebola outbreak in West Africa killed more than 11,000 people, the disease's largest death toll.</p> <p>Ebola was discovered in 1976 in two simultaneous outbreaks in South Sudan and Congo, where it occurred in a village near the Ebola River, after which the disease is named.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/26 Serbia's new government inaugurated
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/serbia-government-tough-decisions-lie-ahead-92137356
GIST	<p>BELGRADE, Serbia -- Serbia's new government was inaugurated after formally winning parliament's approval Wednesday, some six months after an election that reaffirmed the domination of autocratic President Aleksandar Vucic and his right-wing populists.</p> <p>The vote in the 250-seat assembly was 157 for and 68 against the new cabinet. The rest of the lawmakers were absent.</p> <p>The new government, which will be led by Vucic's close party associate Ana Brnabic for her third consecutive term as prime minister, will have to deal with strategic decisions facing the Balkan country. Those include Western calls for Serbia to join sanctions against its ally Russia over the war in Ukraine and normalize relations with the former Serbian province of Kosovo — if it wants to join the European Union.</p> <p>The new cabinet has 28 ministers, including some staunchly pro-Russian like Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic. It also has officials who are considered pro-Western, but they will run less prominent ministries that will have little say on Serbia's future foreign policy decisions.</p> <p>Vucic, who leads the ruling SNS party and who wields almost full influence over government policies, has said he has "limitless trust" in Brnabic, 47, who became Serbia's first female — and openly gay — premier in 2017.</p> <p>In her inaugural speech in Parliament, Brnabic tried to downplay claims that the new government is either pro-Russian or pro-Western.</p> <p>"We are building a European Serbia and (EU) membership itself certainly does not depend only on us," she said. "Serbia will also continue to invest in its friendships with other countries," she added, in an apparent reference to Russia and China.</p> <p>Although its largest portion of foreign trade is with EU-member states, Serbia is almost entirely dependent on Russian gas and has bought weapons from Russia, while China is a major investor.</p> <p>A former anti-Western ultranationalist, Vucic has said he wants to lead Serbia into the EU. But he has refused to join Western sanctions against Russia and maintains friendly ties with Moscow despite the war</p>

	<p>in Ukraine. Aligning foreign policies with those of the EU remains one of the main pre-conditions for Serbia to join the 27-nation bloc.</p> <p>Political analyst Milan St. Protic said Vucic and the governments he has hand-picked during his 10-year rule have allowed the expansion of Russian influence in the country.</p> <p>“It is clear that Serbia has found itself in the Russian jaws,” Protic said. “When that door was opened, they (the Russians) came in from all sides.”</p> <p>Vucic won another five-year mandate in the April vote, which was both a parliamentary and a presidential election.</p> <p>Analysts have said Vucic wanted to delay the formation of a new government as long as possible to put off making big decisions that could hurt his standing among his predominantly pro-Russian electorate.</p> <p>Russia wields strong political influence in Serbia, which is considered Moscow’s strongest ally in Europe. There are fears in the West that Moscow has been using Belgrade to destabilize neighbors in the Balkans, which are still reeling from devastating wars in the 1990s.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/26 Syria, Russia conducted joint military drills
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/syrian-russian-troops-conduct-joint-drills-syria-92144605
GIST	<p>DAMASCUS, Syria -- Syrian and Russian troops conducted joint military drills in Syria involving ground and air forces, Syrian state media reported Wednesday.</p> <p>Russian and Syrian troops simulated attacking enemy positions under the cover of artillery shelling and airstrikes by warplanes and helicopters, according to a video released by Syria’s Defense Ministry. Paratroopers also took part in the war games, taking over positions on overlooking hills.</p> <p>The maneuvers were attended by the commander of the Russian forces in Syria, Lt. Gen. Alexander Chaiko, and Syria’s Defense Minister Gen. Ali Mahmoud Abbass.</p> <p>Russia is a main backer of President Bashar Assad and has a broad presence in Syria, where an 11-year conflict has killed hundreds of thousands and displaced half the country’s pre-war population.</p> <p>Russia became involved militarily in Syria in September 2015 helping to tip the balance of power in favor of Assad’s forces.</p> <p>Such joint drills are not uncommon in Syria.</p> <p>In June, the Syrian and Russian air forces conducted drills over different parts of the country, including on the edge of the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.</p> <p>The two countries also conducted a drill a week before Russia began its invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24.</p> <p>Days before Russia’s invasion of Ukraine began, the Russian military deployed long-range nuclear-capable bombers and fighter jets carrying state-of-the-art hypersonic missiles to Syria for massive naval maneuvers in the Mediterranean Sea.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/26 Russia violence in Ukraine strategic, brutal
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/brutal-russian-general-led-troops-killed-civilians-92122033
GIST	ZDVYZHIVKA, Ukraine -- Even by the standards of the important military officers who came and went in this tiny village, the man walking behind the Kamaz truck stood out.

Soldiers providing security peered from behind fences, their guns bristling in every direction. Two Ka-52 Alligator attack helicopters circled overhead, providing additional cover for Col. Gen. Alexander Chaiko as he escorted an aid convoy in March from the schoolhouse on Tsentralna street that Russian officers commandeered as a headquarters.

Fifteen minutes away, in the village of Oзера, the lives of three men were about to take a dramatic turn for the worse. While Chaiko was directing Russia's attack on Kyiv from Zdvyzhivka, the men were brought to the village by Russian troops, who interrogated and tortured them and then shot them in the garden of a large house about a kilometer (less than a mile) from where the general now stood.

The deaths of these men were part of a pattern of violence that left hundreds of civilians beaten, tortured and executed in territory under Chaiko's command.

This wasn't the work of rogue soldiers, an investigation by The Associated Press and the PBS series "Frontline" shows. It was strategic and organized brutality, perpetrated in areas that were under tight Russian control where military officers — including Chaiko himself — were present.

War crimes prosecutors in Ukraine are trying to gather evidence against Chaiko, who earned a global reputation for brutality as leader of Russia's forces in Syria. And international human rights lawyers said evidence gathered by AP and "Frontline" was enough to merit an investigation of Chaiko at the International Criminal Court.

'WE DO NOT TAKE PRISONERS'

The map seized by Ukrainian forces is almost as tall as a man. It's frayed, creased and deeply outdated — describing towns as they no longer exist. A single red line snakes down from Belarus, along the western flank of the Dnieper River, through Chernobyl and toward Zhuliany airport, in Kyiv.

On the back are a scrawled date — Feb. 22, 2022 — and the stamp of a Russian military unit — No. 07264, Russia's 76th Guards Airborne Assault Division.

At 7 a.m. on Feb. 24, the commander of that division, Maj. Gen. Sergei Chubarykin, ordered his troops to cross into Ukraine from Belarus and fight their way to Kyiv, Ukrainian prosecutors say. Chubarykin reported to Chaiko during the initial phase of the war, two Ukrainian officials told the AP and Frontline.

Boy soldiers — some not much bigger than their guns — perched on top of their tanks, shouting: "Now we will take Kyiv! Kyiv is ours!" witnesses said.

The troops moving toward the capitol had been ordered to block and destroy "nationalist resistance," according to the Royal United Services Institute, a London think tank that has reviewed copies of Russia's battle plans. Soldiers used lists compiled by Russian intelligence and conducted "zachistki" — cleansing operations — sweeping neighborhoods to identify and neutralize anyone who might pose a threat.

"Those orders were written at Chaiko's level. So he would have seen them and signed up for them," said Jack Watling, a senior research fellow at RUSI who shared the battle plans with the AP.

While there is nothing necessarily illegal about that order, it was often implemented with flagrant disregard for the laws of war as Russian troops seized territories across Ukraine.

Witnesses and survivors in Bucha, as well as Oзера, Babyntsi and Zdvyzhivka — all areas under Chaiko's command — told the AP and "Frontline" that Russian soldiers tortured and killed people on the slightest suspicion they might be helping the Ukrainian military. Sweeps intensified after Russian positions were hit with precision, interviews and video show, and soldiers, in intercepted phone calls obtained by the AP, told their loved ones that they'd been ordered to take a no-mercy approach to suspected informants.

Soldiers told their mothers, wives and friends back in Russia that they had killed people simply for being out on the street when “real” civilians would have been in the basement, calls the Ukrainian government intercepted near Kyiv show.

On March 21, a soldier named Vadim called his mother: “We have the order to take phones from everyone and those who resist — in short — to hell with the f-----.”

“We have the order: It does not matter whether they’re civilians or not. Kill everyone.”

The slightest movement of a curtain in a window — a possible sign of a spotter or a gunman — justified slamming an apartment block with lethal artillery. Ukrainians who confessed to passing along Russian troop coordinates were summarily executed, including teenagers, soldiers said.

“We have the order not to take prisoners of war but to shoot them all dead directly,” a soldier nicknamed Lyonya said in a March 14 phone call.

“There was a boy, 18 years old, taken prisoner. First, they shot through his leg with a machine gun, then he got his ears cut off. He admitted to everything and was shot dead,” Lyonya told his mom. “We do not take prisoners. Meaning, we don’t leave anyone alive.”

The Dossier Center, a London-based investigative group funded by Russian opposition figure Mikhail Khodorkovsky, verified the identity of the soldiers who made those calls by cross-referencing Russian phone numbers, linked social media accounts, public reporting and information in leaked Russian databases.

‘THAT’S WHERE PEOPLE WERE KILLED’

Fierce Ukrainian resistance and poor planning pushed Russian troops off their planned line of attack. Some of them ended up in Bucha, where Ukrainian prosecutors say the 76th Guards Airborne Assault Division participated in a lethal cleansing operation on March 4 along Yablunska street, the deadliest road in occupied Bucha and the site of an important Russian command center.

Others settled with thousands of other troops in Zdvyzhivka, a tiny village half an hour north of Bucha that became a major forward operating base for the assault on the capitol, according to Ukrainian military intelligence and audio intercepts obtained by AP.

Russian troops dug into the woods around Zdvyzhivka, building virtual cities that stretched for several kilometers beneath the tall pines and poplar trees. They left gaping trenches sized for tanks, semi-permanent bunkers reinforced with logs and sandbags, rough-hewn tables and benches. There was even a field sauna, photographs and intercepts show.

The Russians set up their most sensitive infrastructure along Tsentralna street, the main north-south artery in town. They took over the village council building, a cultural center and a school and set up headquarters in the large white kindergarten. At the main intersection, near the pond, Russians turned a Baptist church into a field hospital, took over a forestry administration building and commandeered a large ostrich farm for their vehicles and supplies. In the fields behind the church, locals watched helicopters ferry in supplies and evacuate the wounded.

Checkpoints faced in every direction. It was so difficult to cross the checkpoint going south on Tsentralna that locals tried to bypass it, wending their way along a footpath that skirted the pond instead. One woman told AP she tried three times before she was allowed to pass and get back to her own home.

Tania, who was afraid to give her last name, lives on this southern stretch of Tsentralna street. She stayed in Zdvyzhivka with her children during the occupation, hemmed in by Russian checkpoints on both sides.

It seemed like tanks were parked in every yard, Tania said. Troops took over dozens of abandoned homes.

There is one house on Tania's stretch of Tsentralna, between the checkpoints, that stands out. It is the biggest, ritziest compound around. Beyond its high brick wall, an elegant circular driveway leads to a large pinkish house. A stone path winds through the back garden, an oasis of fenced-in green with manicured hedges, thick trees, two gazebos, a basketball court, banks of garden planters. At the far back fence, a small door opens onto the woods beyond.

The soldiers who came and went from that compound were older, professional, spoke like educated men, Tania and other neighbors said. They had cars with drivers. They told people what to do. Everyone figured they were officers.

"That's where people were killed," Tania said, squinting down the street and pointing to the compound.

WHAT THEY FOUND IN THE GARDEN

Life under the occupation of Chaiko's forces was tense and terrifying, local residents told AP and Frontline.

Andrii Shkoliar lives on Tsentralna street with his extended family, a few houses down from the luxurious compound. On March 18, Shkoliar and his wife were walking nearby to a relative's house when a dark-colored UAZ Patriot sped past, stopped abruptly and drove back to them.

A tall, blond soldier with a beard who appeared to be of higher rank stepped out of the Russian-made SUV, demanding to know why they'd broken curfew.

"I give you one hour to go and come back or you'll be like this one in the car," the Russian told him.

Shkoliar peered through the back window of the SUV at a man slumped against the window, eyes bound with tape, his hands behind his back.

On their way back, Shkoliar and his wife saw the same UAZ Patriot parked in front of the officers' compound.

The next day, March 19, Ukrainians launched a precision strike, knocking out a Russian storehouse at the ostrich farm on Tsentralna, according to village head Raisa Kozyr. Russian troops sprang into action, searching door to door and checking documents.

The same blond officer and driver of the UAZ Patriot, along with a third man, appeared at Shkoliar's front door and pulled everyone out of the house to search for weapons. They said they'd kill everyone if they found anything.

"We were saying goodbye to our lives," Shkoliar recalled. "What else could we do?"

The sweeps consumed the whole village.

Vitalii Chernysh was picked up that afternoon as he rode his bike through a field. Chernysh said soldiers found a photo of Russian military vehicles someone had sent him on the messaging app Viber on Feb. 25 and hauled him off with three other people, bound and blindfolded, to a nearby barn. It was below freezing, and none of the prisoners was dressed for the cold.

As night deepened, they chatted with the Russian guarding them. "He said more captured people were brought over," Chernysh recalled. "From Bucha, from Oзера, from Blystavytsia and somewhere else. ... In short, they gathered people."

The next day, Chernysh was taken, blindfolded, to a field and accused of being a spotter.

“Where are the nationalists?” the soldiers demanded. They poured gasoline on him and pretended to set him on fire. They ordered him to run through what they said was a minefield. Still blindfolded, Chernysh struggled to his feet and tried to follow the soldiers’ commands: “Go right. Go straight. Go faster.” Then they beat his legs again, with what felt like a wooden plank.

Chernysh began to wish they’d just kill him.

Finally, a man Chernysh thought was of higher rank came over, examined his phone and told the soldiers to take Chernysh home.

Photos taken shortly after his ordeal show large, livid bruises on the back of his swollen legs. Days later, Russia’s Ministry of Defense released a video of Chaiko pinning medals on soldiers near Zdvyzhivka.

“All units, all divisions are acting the way they were taught,” he said in the March 24 video. “They are doing everything right. I am proud of them.”

When Russian forces retreated a week later, the bodies began to surface.

Bucha, a pleasant town outside Kyiv, quickly became a global symbol of Russia’s wartime atrocities and case No. 1 for Ukrainian war crimes prosecutors. Retreating soldiers left behind the bodies of over 450 men, women and children — almost all bore signs of violent death.

But the slaughter wasn’t limited to Bucha. It was repeated in town after town, village after village. Including in Zdvyzhivka.

“We didn’t know what was happening around us,” said Kozyr, the village head. “What was happening in the woods. And we knew people were missing.”

On March 30, Yevhen Pohranychnyi went to the luxurious home Russian officers had used. Now that they were gone, he wanted to check on his neighbor’s cat and see how badly the house had been looted.

The house was trashed, photographs show. Drawers had been ripped from desks and dressers. Clothes, books and papers were strewn all over the floor. What the Russians hadn’t stolen, they’d smashed.

Pohranychnyi made his way out the back, to the far end of the long garden. There, as night was falling, he found something far worse: the bodies of two men — one with a crushed skull curled up like a child, his joints at strange angles; the other with red marks around his neck, who had bled out from his head and face onto a pink cloth.

The next morning, he brought the village head, the village priest and others to the site. Three more bodies had appeared overnight. The blood was fresh. Some of them had their eyes and hands bound. Two seemed to be dressed in clothes that weren’t their own.

Three of those men — Mykola “Kolia” Moroz, Andrii Voznenko and Mykhailo Honchar — were picked up from nearby Oзера between March 15 and March 22 on suspicion of acting as spotters for the Ukrainian military, eyewitnesses told AP and “Frontline.” Moroz was captured the day after a precision strike on a Russian position hidden in the woods outside Oзера, a drone video analyzed by the Center for Information Resilience, a London-based nonprofit that specializes in digital investigations, shows.

AP and “Frontline” visited that garden in July and found bullet casings and a zip tie on the ground and bullet holes in the fence where the men were found — indications that they had been killed on the premises of the house frequented by Russian officers in one of the most tightly guarded sections of Zdvyzhivka in late March.

All told, 17 people have been found dead in Zdvyzhivka — a village of 1,000 before the war.

CHAIKO IN CHARGE

Chaiko has been sanctioned by the U.K. for his actions in Syria and Human Rights Watch says Chaiko may bear command responsibility for widespread attacks on hospitals and schools and the use of indiscriminate weapons in populated areas during a notorious campaign in Idlib province in 2019 and 2020. At least 1,600 civilians were killed; some 1.4 million were displaced, according to the group.

In Ukraine, prosecutors say they don't have proof Chaiko ordered specific crimes, but it is clear that atrocities were committed under his watch.

In June, the U.S. State Department sanctioned Russia's 76th Guards Airborne Assault Division and its 234th Guards Airborne Assault Regiment, as well as the 64th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade, for atrocities in Bucha.

Those units were all under the ultimate command of Chaiko, Ukrainian authorities told AP.

But Chaiko's responsibility extended beyond Bucha.

To try to understand who might have been involved in the deaths of the men from Oзера, the AP obtained data about their cell phone activity from the Ukrainian government. On March 21, the day Russian soldiers captured Voznenko, his cell phone pinged the same cell tower as 40 Russian phone numbers — an indication of who was nearby when he was abducted.

The Dossier Center found explicit references to specific Russian military units in recent work history databases for 14 of those phone numbers. Nine came from units Ukrainian authorities told the AP were under Chaiko's command. The formal wartime command structures for the rest are unclear, but four are from unit 62295, an airborne regiment based in Ivanovo, northeast of Moscow. That unit was in Oзера, along Chaiko's front in the war, according to Russian phone numbers left behind on scraps of paper in Oзера that the Dossier Center traced to specific soldiers.

Days before the bodies of Voznenko and the others were found mutilated in the garden in Zdvyzhivka, two eyewitnesses spotted Chaiko again, about a kilometer (less than a mile) down the road at his headquarters in the village.

Both men independently identified him as Chaiko when AP and "Frontline" showed them a photograph of the colonel general in July.

"It's him," said Mykola Skrynnyk, 58, who served in the Soviet army in the 1980s, and says he exchanged a few words with the general. "Now I understand why there was so much security."

"When you look at everything that was happening in Zdvyzhivka, it becomes evident that this is not just a singular case, this is their policy for the territory they capture," said Taras Semkiv, a war crimes prosecutor in the office of Ukraine's prosecutor general.

As top commander, Chaiko obviously "would have to be aware of what was happening near his headquarters located in the same village," he said. "It's only logical."

But, he added, "This has to be proven. And I think we will do it."

There's no concept of command responsibility in Ukrainian law, but if prosecutors can demonstrate that Chaiko played a key role in implementing illegal policies of the Russian Federation, or should have known what his troops were doing and was in a position to stop, or punish, their behavior, he could be charged for war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide in an international court.

Toby Cadman, an international human rights lawyer in London who is working to hold Russia legally accountable for atrocities in Syria, said the evidence AP and “Frontline” collected was enough to merit an investigation of Chaiko at the International Criminal Court.

“Significant events like this can then fall through the cracks, they don’t get properly investigated,” he said. “A case file could be taken to the ICC, because half the job is done.”

“It is a significant case. It is a strategically important area. It is a strategically important individual,” he said. “Everything about it makes it a significant matter to look at,” he said.

The ICC declined to comment, citing confidentiality.

NEVER AGAIN?

While they seek more specific evidence, Ukrainian prosecutors have indicted Chaiko for the crime of aggression, a broad charge that seeks to hold him responsible for helping to plan and execute an illegal war in Ukraine.

They say he was in Zdvizhivka from March 20 until March 31, directing the assault on Kyiv — that is, at the same time the three men from Ozeri were killed and Chernysh was tortured.

Chaiko’s trial is expected to begin soon in Ukraine. But the dock will almost certainly be empty.

The International Criminal Court has a better chance than Ukraine of extraditing, or capturing, Chaiko one day. It is currently the only international forum that can hold leaders criminally responsible for wartime atrocities. But it is not a simple task.

The ICC doesn’t have jurisdiction over Russians for the broad crime of aggression because Russia — like the U.S. — never agreed to give it authority to do so. Instead, prosecutors must link commanders with specific crimes.

That makes it hard to build cases against leaders like Chaiko — and Vladimir Putin.

A growing number of people are calling for the creation of a special tribunal for the crime of aggression in Ukraine — similar to those set up for conflicts in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia — to address this gap in international law. They say it would be the best way to make Putin pay.

“The crime of aggression is called the mother of all crimes,” Ukraine’s foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, told the AP and Frontline. “You don’t have war crimes if you don’t have the crime of aggression. So the best way to prosecute personally President Putin is to have a special ad hoc tribunal for the crime of aggression.”

It’s not clear whether Kuleba and his allies will succeed. They face political opposition from powerful nations who don’t want to see their own leaders in the dock and from the chief prosecutor of the ICC, Karim Khan, who said his court can handle prosecutions on its own.

“We have clear jurisdiction,” he said in an interview in July. “Victims don’t have much tolerance in my view for vanity projects or distractions.”

The Kremlin did not respond to AP’s requests for comment.

But there is no sign Moscow has sanctioned Chaiko for the very public atrocities committed on his watch. Instead, Putin praised Chaiko for his actions in Syria, awarding him the title “Hero of Russia” in 2020 and promoting him to colonel general in June 2021.

	<p>Cadman, the international human rights lawyer in London, watched with dismay as Russian atrocities in Syria — under the leadership of some of the same men, including Chaiko — went unanswered.</p> <p>“If we do not act decisively now,” he said, “it will not end in Ukraine.”</p>
Return to Top	

Cyber, Tech Awareness

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 CISA version 2.0 Traffic Light Protocol
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/federal-pages/dhs/cisa-upgrades-to-version-2-0-of-traffic-light-protocol-on-nov-1/
GIST	<p>On Nov. 1, 2022, CISA will upgrade from Traffic Light Protocol (TLP) 1.0 to TLP 2.0 in accordance with the recommendation by the Forum of Incident Response Security Teams (FIRST) that organizations move to 2.0 by the end of 2022. TLP Version 2.0 brings the following key updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TLP:CLEAR replaces TLP:WHITE for publicly releasable information. • TLP:AMBER+STRICT supplements TLP:AMBER, clarifying when information may be shared with the recipient’s organization only. <p>CISA encourages all network defenders and partners to upgrade to TLP Version 2.0 to facilitate greater information sharing and collaboration. For more information see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On Nov. 1, CISA Upgrades to Traffic Light Protocol 2.0 — Join Us! by Tom Millar, Cybersecurity Senior Advisor, CISA, and Co-chair of the FIRST TLP Special Interest Group (SIG) • CISA.gov/TLP, which contains links to CISA’s TLP 2.0 User Guide and Fact Sheet • FIRST.org/TLP <p>Note: CISA’s Automated Indicator Sharing (AIS) capability will not update from TLP 1.0 to TLP 2.0 until March 2023. This exception includes AIS’s use of the following open standards: the Structured Threat Information Expression (STIX™) for cyber threat indicators and defensive measures information and the Trusted Automated Exchange of Intelligence Information (TAXII™) for machine-to-machine communications.</p>
Return to Top	Read more at CISA

HEADLINE	10/26 Anonymous warns FIFA: expel Iran
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/cybersecurity/anonymous-warns-fifa-to-expel-iran-from-world-cup-over-deadly-drone-attacks-on-ukraine/
GIST	<p>The Anonymous hacktivist collective that has been conducting cyber ops against Russia and supporting entities since the invasion of Ukraine is now targeting FIFA, with a warning that the organization must ban Iran from next month’s World Cup for supplying deadly kamikaze drones that have been terrorizing Ukrainians.</p> <p>“FIFA must ban #Iran after suspending #Russia. Khamenei provides Russia with kamikaze drones and supports Putin’s chaos,” one Anonymous account tweeted Tuesday. “Removing #Iran from the World Cup is crucial for Iranians, Ukrainians, and the rest of the world to expose the Mullahs’ Regime.”</p> <p>The vow dovetails with the #OpIran initiative from the hackers in support of more than a month of protests in Iran stemming from the death of Masha Amini, who died in police custody Sept. 16, three days after her arrest and alleged beating for improperly wearing a hijab in Tehran.</p> <p>“If FIFA does not exclude #Iran from the World Cup, it will be involved in the horrific slaughters committed by the Islamic Republic,” one Anonymous account tweeted. “Muting the voices of freedom fighters is equal to killing them.”</p>

Pentagon Press Secretary Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder told reporters Thursday that the Defense Department has determined “that Iranians have been on the ground in Ukraine to assist Russia with the drone operations there.”

“And so, in terms of what that means, obviously, again, we continue to see Iran be complicit in terms of exporting terror, not only in the Middle East region, but now also to Ukraine,” Ryder added.

Pressed on Russia’s denial that the drones originated in Iran, Ryder reiterated that “we know that these drones are from Iran.”

“It’s obvious that they’re lying... it’s just indicative of the kinds of rhetoric that you hear coming from Iran, and from Russia, trying to say that these are not Iranian drones when they clearly are,” he said.

Ryder did not give an assessment on whether Russia has ordered more drones from Iran, “but I will say that we wouldn’t be surprised if that were the case, given their situation.”

“The Ukrainians have been pretty effective in terms of shooting a lot of those drones down — I’m not going to be able to provide you with numbers on that, other than to say that, in that regard, they have not quite probably met Russian goals in terms of their ability to strike targets,” he said. “That said, clearly, they have wreaked havoc and caused destruction and killed innocent civilians. And so, it’s a serious threat. And we’ll continue to work with the Ukrainians to provide them with the capabilities that they need.”

In a video released Tuesday, Anonymous addressed “FIFA leaders and you football bureaucracy.”

“We are Anonymous and we have a message for you. Iran set to be kicked out of this year’s FIFA World Cup and replaced by Ukraine over Russia’s alleged use of Iranian drones in its war on Kyiv,” the video stated.

“While Iranian leaders will have fun watching their national team play at the World Cup, Ukrainians will be killed by Iranian drones and Iranian missiles,” the video continued, quoting Sergiy Palkin, CEO of Ukrainian soccer club Shakhtar Donetsk, in a post he wrote on Facebook.

“Iranian people will continue to be persecuted – women, men, children who fight for their freedoms will continue to be locked up and killed by the Islamic Republic regime while leaders watch their team play World Cup 2022,” the video continues. “The blood of the innocent will continue to flow as the game continues for the bloodthirsty killers.”

“Every one of them (the drones) was produced, delivered by Iranian authorities, Iranian instructors, and the military directly trained and handled drone launches that destroyed homes, museums, universities, offices, sports grounds and playgrounds, and, most importantly, killed Ukrainians,” the video said, quoting Palkin.

“We Anonymous join the protests and call on FIFA and the entire international community to immediately ban the Iranian national team from playing at the World Cup for the country’s direct involvement in the terrorist attacks against Ukrainians. We ask to replace Iran with Ukraine. Replacing Iran with Ukraine would be historically and sportingly justified.”

The Anonymous message declared Operation World Cup, #OpWorldCup, “activated and ask everyone to join the pressure on the football bureaucracy to trigger the expulsion of Iran’s World Cup team in Qatar on November 20.”

“Your choice expels the Iranian team immediately from World Cup 2022 or wait for us,” the hacktivists stressed.

	<p>Anonymous accounts on Twitter reported this morning that they had knocked down the websites of the Government of Qatar communications office — promising “more targets incoming” — and Al Daffa Aluminium, Upvc & Steel Works in Doha. “Qatar you’ve been warned replace the Islamic Regime team with #Ukraine,” noted one Anonymous account. “You should have expected Us.”</p> <p>Another Anonymous account listed corporate sponsors and partners of the World Cup, adding, “#OpWorldCup take this into consideration, because you see their silence proves that war crimes, crimes against humanity and violation of human rights are sponsored #OpFifa!”</p> <p>FIFA announced Feb. 28 that Russia was suspended from all competition as a result of its invasion of Ukraine. “Football is fully united here and in full solidarity with all the people affected in Ukraine,” FIFA and the UEFA Executive Committee said in a statement at the time.</p> <p>Iran is scheduled to play against England in the Group Stage of the World Cup on Nov. 21.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Kimusky uses 3 Android malware strains
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2022/10/kimsuky-hackers-spotted-using-3-new.html
GIST	<p>The North Korean espionage-focused actor known as Kimsuky has been observed using three different Android malware strains to target users located in its southern counterpart.</p> <p>That's according to findings from South Korean cybersecurity company S2W, which named the malware families FastFire, FastViewer, and FastSpy.</p> <p>"The FastFire malware is disguised as a Google security plugin, and the FastViewer malware disguises itself as 'Hancm Office Viewer,' [while] FastSpy is a remote access tool based on AndroSpy," researchers Lee Sebin and Shin Yeongjae said.</p> <p>Kimsuky, also known by the names Black Banshee, Thallium, and Velvet Chollima, is believed to be tasked by the North Korean regime with a global intelligence-gathering mission, disproportionately targeting individuals and organizations in South Korea, Japan, and the U.S.</p> <p>This past August, Kaspersky unearthed a previously undocumented infection chain dubbed GoldDragon to deploy a Windows backdoor capable of stealing information from the victim such as file lists, user keystrokes, and stored web browser login credentials.</p> <p>The advanced persistent threat is also known to an Android version of AppleSeed implant to execute arbitrary actions and exfiltrate information from the infected devices.</p> <p>FastFire, FastViewer, and FastSpy are the latest additions to its evolving Android malware arsenal, which are designed to receive commands from Firebase and download additional payloads.</p> <p>"FastViewer is a repackaged APK by adding arbitrary malicious code inserted by an attacker to the normal Hancm Office Viewer app," the researchers said, adding the malware also downloads FastSpy as a next-stage.</p> <p>The rogue apps in question are below -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • com.viewer.fastsecure (Google 보안 Plugin) • com.tf.thinkdroid.secviewer (FastViewer) <p>Both FastViewer and FastSpy abuse Android's accessibility API permissions to fulfill its spying behaviors, with the latter automating user clicks to grant itself extensive permissions in a manner analogous to MaliBot.</p>

	<p>FastSpy, once launched, enables the adversary to seize control of the targeted devices, intercept phone calls and SMSes, track users' locations, harvest documents, capture keystrokes, and record information from the phone's camera, microphone, and speaker.</p> <p>S2W's attribution of the malware to Kimsuky is based on overlaps with a server domain named "mc.pzs[.]kr," which was previously employed in a May 2022 campaign identified as orchestrated by the group to distribute malware disguised as North Korea related press releases.</p> <p>"Kimsuky group has continuously performed attacks to steal the target's information targeting mobile devices," the researchers said. "In addition, various attempts are being made to bypass detection by customizing Androspy, an open source RAT."</p> <p>"Since Kimsuky group's mobile targeting strategy is getting more advanced, it is necessary to be careful about sophisticated attacks targeting Android devices."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 RomCom hackers target Ukraine military
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2022/10/romcom-hackers-circulating-malicious.html
GIST	<p>The threat actor behind a remote access trojan called RomCom RAT has been observed targeting Ukrainian military institutions as part of a new spear-phishing campaign that commenced on October 21, 2022.</p> <p>The development marks a shift in the attacker's modus operandi, which has been previously attributed to spoofing legitimate apps like Advanced IP Scanner and pdfFiller to drop backdoors on compromised systems.</p> <p>"The initial 'Advanced IP Scanner' campaign occurred on July 23, 2022," the BlackBerry research and intelligence team said. "Once the victim installs a Trojanized bundle, it drops RomCom RAT to the system."</p> <p>While previous iterations of the campaign involved the use of trojanized Advanced IP Scanner, the unidentified adversarial collective has since switched to pdfFiller as of October 20, indicating an active attempt on part of the adversary to refine tactics and thwart detection.</p> <p>These lookalike websites host a rogue installer package that results in the deployment of the RomCom RAT, which is capable of harvesting information and capturing screenshots, all of which is exported to a remote server.</p> <p>The adversary's latest activity directed against the Ukrainian military is a departure in that it employs a phishing email with an embedded link as an initial infection vector, leading to a fake website dropping the next stage downloader.</p> <p>This downloader, signed using a valid digital certificate from "Blythe Consulting sp. z o.o." for an extra layer of evasion, is then used to extract and run the RomCom RAT malware. BlackBerry said the same signer is used by the legitimate version of pdfFiller.</p> <p>Besides the Ukrainian military, other targets of the campaign include IT companies, food brokers, and food manufacturing entities in the U.S., Brazil, and the Philippines.</p> <p>"This campaign is a good example of the blurred line between cybercrime-motivated threat actors and targeted attack threat actors," Dmitry Bestuzhev, threat researcher at BlackBerry, told The Hacker News.</p> <p>"In the past, both groups acted independently, relying on different tooling. Today, targeted attack threat actors rely more on traditional tooling, making attribution harder."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 Medibank: all customer data exposed
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/all-customer-data-exposed-to/
GIST	<p>Australian health insurance giant Medibank has announced that all of its customers' personal information was accessed by ransomware actors, a few days after playing down the impact of a recent breach.</p> <p>The firm admitted in a new statement that the threat actors may have compromised personal data on all customers, including international students and policyholders with Medibank business ahm.</p> <p>That could mean nearly four million Australians have been exposed to the risk of follow-on fraud and phishing attacks.</p> <p>The data stolen may include names, addresses, date of birth, Medicare numbers, policy numbers, phone numbers, claims data and even passport numbers for some international students.</p> <p>"The criminal also claimed to have stolen other information, including data related to credit card security," the notice continued. "We are in the process of verifying this allegation. Our procedures restrict us from retaining full credit card numbers and we do not hold CVV numbers."</p> <p>The firm had originally assured customers that none of their personal data had been accessed during an extortion attack in which it stopped the perpetrators before they could deploy the ransomware payload.</p> <p>However, the group subsequently got in touch to say that they had indeed exfiltrated as much as 200GB of data from the firm before it was discovered, providing a sample for Medibank to check.</p> <p>The insurer still doesn't know for sure how many customers are affected, as it continues its investigation.</p> <p>"As previously advised, we have evidence that the criminal has removed some of this data and it is now likely that the criminal has stolen further personal and health claims data," it said.</p> <p>"As a result, we expect that the number of affected customers could grow substantially."</p> <p>Reports have claimed the breach could cost the firm tens of millions of dollars as it doesn't have cyber-insurance.</p> <p>The confusing public statements issued by the company will only add to customer anger and highlights the challenge of incident response.</p> <p>Jordan Schroeder, managing CISO at Barrier Networks, argued that improving cyber-resilience must be a priority for firms, as once actors get inside networks it can be difficult to determine the blast radius of attacks.</p> <p>"This latest update comes only a few days after the company had said no customer data was compromised, so it certainly raises some alarm bells about the handling of the incident and investigation into the breach," he added.</p> <p>"However, in fairness, Medibank is not alone. Breach investigations are a long process, and it can sometimes take months to fully understand the scale and impact of attacks."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Dormant Colors adware Chrome extensions
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/chrome-extensions-dormant-colors-malware/
GIST	<p>Dormant Colors is a widespread browser extension malware, which according to a report from Guardio Labs, was discovered in the latest batch of Chrome extensions. This is basically adware spread across 30 different extensions in Microsoft's Edge Add-ons repository and the Chrome Web Store.</p>

These malicious extensions were also spotted on spammed video-downloading websites. Researchers suspect that the extensions can send users to [phishing sites](#) that steal login credentials.

Analyzing Adware Capabilities

Dormant Colors can inject ads into standard pages and append affiliate links to famous e-commerce websites to get the same affiliate revenue for the developer that legit sites get from linking those products.

As per the researchers, the [adware](#) is dubbed Dormant Colors because it focuses a lot on style and color themes from Super colors to Action colors, Power colors, etc. It comprises 30 different extensions boasting over one million downloads.

The infection chain starts when innocent-looking helps marketed as webpage modifiers allow users to alter font styles and background colors on the sites they visit. In the background, the [adware hijacks the user's browsing or search histories](#), inserts ads within accessed webpages, and side-loads malicious code while successfully evading detection. In total, 30 malicious extensions were discovered.

According to a [blog post](#) by Nati Tal from Guardio, the attackers can target domains and individual users through fake search results, website hijacking, or spear phishing after stealing the user's browser data and transmitting it to a C2 server. This data is used to update the extension with more advanced attack vectors through silent code injection.

Both Microsoft and Google have taken down the malicious extensions. However, developers can still re-upload them. You must double-check the browser extension's source before installing it. Moreover, always [use credible anti-virus software](#).

Protection from Malicious Chrome Extension

A malicious Chrome extension is a type of malware that can infect your computer through the Chrome web browser. These extensions are often used to track your browsing activity and steal your personal information. There are a few things you can do to protect yourself from these extensions.

First, only install extensions from trusted sources. Google's Chrome Web Store is a good place to start, but you should also check reviews before installing anything. If an extension seems too good to be true, it probably is.

Second, keep your browser and extensions up to date. Both Chrome and the extensions you have installed will receive updates regularly. These updates usually include security fixes that can help protect you from new threats.

Finally, be cautious about the permissions you grant to extensions. Many malicious extensions will ask for more permissions than they need.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Notorious 'BestBuy' hacker arraigned in US
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/notorious-bestbuy-hacker-arraigned-for-running-dark-web-market/
GIST	<p>A notorious British hacker was arraigned on Wednesday by the U.S. Department of Justice for allegedly running the now defunct "The Real Deal" dark web marketplace.</p> <p>The 34-year-old defendant Daniel Kaye (aka Bestbuy, Spdrman, Popopret, UserL0ser) allegedly ran the illicit services market between early 2015 and November 2016 when The Real Deal shut down.</p> <p>Threat actors used this platform to sell anything from stolen credentials for U.S. government agencies' systems and hacking tools to drugs, weapons, and government data.</p>

Among the login credentials put up for sale on the dark web market, [court documents](#) mention credentials for computers belonging to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the U.S. Navy, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the U.S. Postal Service (USPS).

Kaye also allegedly trafficked Twitter and Linked accounts and conspired with a threat actor known as TheDarkOverlord to sell stolen Social Security numbers.

He laundered the cryptocurrency obtained while operating The Real Deal using the Bitmixer.io Bitcoin mixer service to hide the illicit gains from law enforcement's blockchain tracing analysis efforts.

"While living overseas, this defendant allegedly operated an illegal website that made hacking tools and login credentials available for purchase, including those for U.S. government agencies," [said](#) U.S. Attorney Ryan K. Buchanan.

Best known for crippling German ISP Deutsche Telekom

Kaye made a name for himself as the developer and seller of the GovRAT malware [[PDF](#)] that his "customers" used to hack U.S. government agencies.

Kaye infamously [hijacked and accidentally took down](#) over 900,000 routers on Deutsche Telekom's network in late November 2016 [using a buggy Mirai botnet](#) malware variant.

The Deutsche Telekom routers were commandeered to boost its DDoS botnet's firepower after being hired by an undisclosed Liberian ISP to [target its local competitors in DDoS attacks](#).

He also advertised DDoS-for-hire renting services backed by a massive [botnet of over 400,000 Mirai-infected IoT devices](#).

After using his Mirai to take over another 100,000 routers on the network of multiple UK ISPs (i.e., UK Postal Office, TalkTalk, and Kcom) and, again, unintentionally also taking them down, [Kaye was arrested](#) by U.K.'s National Crime Agency (NCA) in late February 2017 at a London airport.

According to DOJ's press release, Kaye was overseas when the indictment was filed, and he consented in September 2022 to his extradition from Cyprus to the U.S.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Ransomware hits industrial sector hard
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/ics-ot/ransomware-gangs-ramp-industrial-attacks-us
GIST	<p>Ransomware gangs are hitting the industrial sector hard — and especially manufacturing companies, with significant spikes in cyberattack activity against US organizations spotted in the third quarter. Meanwhile, emerging ransomware groups are bursting onto the scene, threatening to push the rate of attacks up even higher.</p> <p>According to a Dragos Q3 analysis of ransomware attacks on industrial organizations, 36% of the recorded cases globally hit North America (46 incidents). This is a significant 10% increase over last quarter, when a quarter of cases affected the region.</p> <p>However, the analysis also found that the rate of attacks globally remained flat quarter over quarter — 128 incidents for Q3 vs. 125 in Q2.</p> <p>The majority (68%) of observed incidents were aimed at the manufacturing sector. Out of the confirmed attacks (i.e., those publicly reported, seen in the firm's telemetry, or confirmed on the Dark Web), 88 were against that segment, especially those producing metal products (12 attacks).</p>

Stephen Banda, senior manager of security solutions at Lookout, noted that the manufacturing sector, like everyone else, is moving to the cloud; digitizing manufacturing, inventory tracking, operations, and maintenance increases agility and efficiency, with less production downtime and a greater nimbleness. But it also opens up new attack surfaces.

"To remain competitive, manufacturers are investing in intellectual property and new technologies like digital twins," he tells Dark Reading. "In short, manufacturers are transforming the way they produce and deliver goods - moving toward industrial automation and the flexible factory. This transformation, known as Industry 4.0, puts pressure on mobile devices and cloud solutions."

Yet for most manufacturers, security solutions still remain on-premises, he adds.

"This creates efficacy and scalability challenges when tasked with protecting productivity solutions that have moved to the cloud," he notes. "Security therefore must also move to the cloud to adequately safeguard manufacturing operations."

As for other industrial segments, 9% of attacks targeted the food and beverage sector (12 incidents), followed by oil and natural gas (6%, or eight incidents) and the energy and pharmaceuticals sectors (collectively making up 10% of attacks, with seven and six incidents respectively). The chemical, mining, engineering, and water and wastewater systems segments had just one attack each.

Different Threat Actors Target Different Industrial Segments

In terms of the actors on the industrial stage, the LockBit gang was behind more than a third of all global incidents (35%), while some other known names focused on the energy sector ([Ragnar Locker](#) and [BlackCat/AlphaV](#), notably). But the quarter also saw the rise of some emerging actors, like Sparta Blog, BianLian, Donuts, Onyx, and the [slow-burning Yanluowang](#).

In all cases, various groups seemed to have specialties, Dragos noted, including:

- Ragnar Locker has been targeting mainly energy.
- Cl0p Leaks has been targeting only water and wastewater.
- Karakurt has targeted only manufacturing in Q3, while in Q2, it only targeted transportation entities.
- LockBit 3.0 is the only group that targeted chemicals, drilling, industrial supplies, and interior design.
- Stormous has only targeted Vietnam.
- Lorenz has only targeted the United States.
- Sparta Blog has only targeted Spain.
- Black Basta and Hive mainly targeted the transportation sector.

Bud Broomhead, CEO at Viakoo, noted that specific ransomware strains targeting specific industries should galvanize intelligence sharing.

"This should spur more industry-level coordination to protect against those threats, specifically between companies that otherwise would compete in the marketplace," he says. "Rather than every organization individually mounting defenses, industry-wide responses are needed (put another way, cybercriminals are attacking an industry which requires industry-level responses). Threat actors don't exist in silos, so why should the response to them be siloed?"

That coordination could be vitally important, given that going forward, Dragos researchers warned that more new ransomware groups will appear in the next quarter, as either new or reformed ones, due to the changes in ransomware groups and the [leaking of the LockBit 3.0 builder](#) — all of which could lead to greater attack volumes.

"[We have] high confidence that ransomware will continue to disrupt industrial operations, whether through the integration of [operational technology] OT kill processes into ransomware strains, flattened networks allowing for ransomware to spread into OT environments, or through precautionary shutdowns

	<p>of OT environments by operators to prevent ransomware from spreading to OT systems," Dragos researchers said in the Wednesday report.</p> <p>Broomhead noted that ramped up attacks are likely being driven by twin engines, including the Russia-Ukraine conflict.</p> <p>"The rise in ransomware attacks against industrial organizations who rely on OT systems is likely coming from threat actors viewing such organizations as easier victims because OT systems and devices are much more vulnerable than traditional IT systems," he says. "While there may be a rise in targeting industrial organizations because of the conflict in Ukraine, those organizations have been targeted for a long time by several foreign adversaries, therefore this increase is a combination of industrial OT systems being easier to exploit and increased activity due to Ukraine."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Chemical sector in cybersecurity sprint
SOURCE	https://www.cyberscoop.com/white-house-sprint-chemical-sector/
GIST	<p>The chemical industry is the next sector to take up President Biden's 100-day cybersecurity sprint, the administration announced Wednesday, an effort designed to sharpen operators' focus on the most significant risks from a digital attack such as gas leaks and other contaminations.</p> <p>The sprint also aims to improve information sharing and "analytical coordination" between the public and private sector and encourage chemical manufacturers to deploy threat detection on control systems.</p> <p>The sprints were first launched as a pilot with the electric sector in April 2021 and followed up with the pipeline, water and railway sectors. Biden's memorandum on improving critical infrastructure control systems codified the exercises and amounted to a rare moment for the White House to acknowledge industrial control cybersecurity.</p> <p>The fact sheet released by the Biden administration noted that the chemical sector sprint would incorporate lessons learned from previous sprints.</p> <p>A CISA official told Axios, which first reported the announcement, that the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency and the Chemical Sector Coordinating Council will set up new task force to implement the sprint. CISA is the sector risk management agency for the chemical sector.</p> <p>The 100-day grid cybersecurity sprint led to over 150 utilities deploying new technologies to improve cybersecurity defenses, according to a DOE press release.</p> <p>CISA and the Environmental Protection Agency, which is the sector risk management agency for the water and wastewater sector, have also developed a roadmap aimed at addressing the varying levels of cyber defenses within the water sector as a result of the 100-day sprint, according to a source familiar with the situation. The roadmap aims at helping water utilities assess their own level of cybersecurity to guide them to the level needed to deploy ICS monitoring technology.</p> <p>The sprint comes as the Department of Homeland Security and the National Institute of Standards and Technology, among other agencies, are expected to soon announce voluntary cybersecurity performance goals for critical infrastructure.</p> <p>The announcement also comes as CISA is asking for industry feedback on the new cyber incident reporting law.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Ransomware victims in highest payments
----------	---

SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/these-ransomware-victims-are-making-the-highest-ransom-payments/?web_view=true
GIST	<p>Victims of ransomware attacks in the manufacturing and production industry are making the biggest ransom payments, with the average ransom demand paid coming in at just over \$2 million.</p> <p>Ransomware is a significant cybersecurity issue that affects every sector. But according to analysis of attacks by cybersecurity company Sophos, ransomware is costing manufacturing and production the most.</p> <p>Of the victims who made a ransom payment to cyber criminals in order to get the decryption key to retrieve encrypted files and servers – and disclosed how much they paid for it – the average ransom was \$2,036,189.</p> <p>That's more than double the overall average ransom payment made by those who detailed the payment, which amounted to \$812,360.</p> <p>Manufacturing is a tempting target for ransomware gangs because of the important role it plays in supply chains – and a manufacturing plant being offline for a significant amount of time will be extremely expensive and have knock-on effects on other industries, businesses and consumers.</p> <p>That means some victims are giving into ransom demands – and in some cases, cyber criminals are demanding substantial ransoms because they know victims are desperate to restore operations to normal.</p> <p>Many production facilities are run on older computer systems and industrial 'operational technology' or OT, which means it's hard to apply security patches – if there are security patches available at all.</p> <p>"Manufacturing is an attractive sector to target for cyber criminals due to the privileged position it occupies in the supply chain. Outdated infrastructure and lack of visibility into the OT environment provides attackers with an easy way in and a launching pad for attacks inside a breached network," said John Shier, senior security advisor at Sophos.</p> <p>"The convergence of IT and OT is increasing the attack surface and exacerbating an already complex threat environment," he added.</p> <p>Of those who paid the ransoms – despite warnings not to – 37% of respondents ended up paying more than \$100,000 while 8% paid more than \$1 million for a decryption key.</p> <p>But while victims might believe meeting a ransom demand is the quickest way to recover their data, according to analysis of incidents in the manufacturing and production sector, an average of just 59% of data was recovered after paying a ransom – that's lower than the 61% of data recovered on average across all sectors.</p> <p>One of the key protections that's recommended against ransomware attacks is the use of offline backups and regularly updating and testing them, so that in the event of a ransomware attack, it's possible to restore networks without paying a ransom. However, the report warns that manufacturing has among the lowest reported rate of backup use across sectors.</p> <p>Other recommendations for protecting networks against ransomware attacks and other cyber threats include ensuring that patches and security updates are applied – and that if security updates can't be applied, that the device or system should be segmented from the rest of the network and away from facing the internet.</p> <p>According to the research, 38% of attempted ransomware attacks against manufacturing and production were stopped before data could be encrypted – and Sophos recommends that actively hunting for attackers in the network is crucial for detecting potential incidents before they happen.</p>

	<p>"While having reliable backups is an important part of recovery, today's ransomware threat requires a detailed response plan that includes human-led, threat-hunting capabilities," said Shier.</p> <p>"Complex attacks require comprehensive protection, which, for many organizations, will include the addition of managed detection and response (MDR) teams who are trained to look for and neutralize active attackers," he said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Tally: 5,000 health data breaches since 2009																							
SOURCE	https://www.bankinfosecurity.com/federal-tally-reaches-5000-health-data-breaches-since-2009-a-20335?&web_view=true																							
GIST	<p>The federal tally of health data breaches reached a new milestone this week: The healthcare industry has reported more than 5,000 major data privacy and security incidents to the Department of Health and Human Services. The department's Office of Civil Rights keeps a public online tally on its HIPAA breach "wall of shame," which has been running since 2009.</p> <p>A Wednesday snapshot of the website shows a total of 5,006 reported incidents, each affecting more than 500 individuals, with an overall total of nearly 369 million affected individuals.</p> <p>That's more people affected by large health data breaches than the total U.S. population, which the Census Bureau on Jan. 1 tallied as 332.4 million. Likely many individuals have been caught up in more than one major health data breach.</p> <p>So far in 2022 alone, 562 major data breaches affecting more than 39.2 million individuals have been posted to the tally. Companies reported hacking as the cause behind a large majority of those incidents.</p> <p>About 206 of the breaches so far this year involved business associates. Those breaches affected 18.7 million individuals - or about 48% of the total affected by major health data breaches in 2022.</p> <p>10 Largest Health Data Breaches in 2022, So Far</p> <table><tr><th>Breached Entity</th><th>Individuals Affected</th></tr><tr><td>OneTouchPoint</td><td>4.1 million</td></tr><tr><td>Advocate Aurora Health</td><td>3 million</td></tr><tr><td>Shields Health Care Group</td><td>2 million</td></tr><tr><td>Professional Finance Co.</td><td>1.9 million</td></tr><tr><td>Baptist Medical Center</td><td>1.6 million</td></tr><tr><td>Novant Health</td><td>1.4 million</td></tr><tr><td>Broward Health</td><td>1.35 million</td></tr><tr><td>Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center</td><td>1.3 million</td></tr><tr><td>Practice Resources</td><td>942,000</td></tr><tr><td>Partnership HealthPlan of California</td><td>855,000</td></tr></table> <p>Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services</p> <p>Bigger Picture</p>		Breached Entity	Individuals Affected	OneTouchPoint	4.1 million	Advocate Aurora Health	3 million	Shields Health Care Group	2 million	Professional Finance Co.	1.9 million	Baptist Medical Center	1.6 million	Novant Health	1.4 million	Broward Health	1.35 million	Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center	1.3 million	Practice Resources	942,000	Partnership HealthPlan of California	855,000
Breached Entity	Individuals Affected																							
OneTouchPoint	4.1 million																							
Advocate Aurora Health	3 million																							
Shields Health Care Group	2 million																							
Professional Finance Co.	1.9 million																							
Baptist Medical Center	1.6 million																							
Novant Health	1.4 million																							
Broward Health	1.35 million																							
Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center	1.3 million																							
Practice Resources	942,000																							
Partnership HealthPlan of California	855,000																							

Of the 5,006 known healthcare industry breaches, slightly less than half are hacking incidents - but their relatively low frequency belies their importance, since those breaches were responsible for nearly 83% of all people affected.

Incidents involving business associates are less lopsided in the gap between frequency and effect. They amount to about 27% of total breaches and about 35% of all people affected.

10 Largest Health Data Breaches Since 2009

Breached Entity	Individuals Affected
Anthem Inc.	79 million
Optum360	11.5 million
Premiera Blue Cross	11 million
Laboratory Corp. of America	10.3 million
Excellus Health Plan	9.36 million
Community Health Systems	6.1 million
Science Applications International Corp.	4.9 million
Community Health Systems	4.5 million
UCLA	4.5 million
20/20 Eye Care Network	4.1 million

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

To date, the 2014 cyberattack on health plan [Anthem Inc.](#), which was reported in February 2015 as a hacking incident affecting nearly 79 million individuals, remains the largest health data breach appearing on the tally.

So far, none of the 10 largest [HIPAA](#) breaches appearing on the HHS website were reported in 2022. The 11th-largest breach posted to the federal tally was reported this year on July 27 by business associate [OneTouchPoint](#), a Wisconsin-based printing and mailing vendor.

That hacking incident, which involved [ransomware](#), was reported by the [business associate](#) as affecting more than 4.1 million individuals. It is the largest breach posted on the federal tally so far this year.

Looking Ahead

Health data breach trends - especially those involving hacking incidents, such as ransomware and data exfiltration attacks, and vendors - will likely expand, given the consolidation and duplication of electronic protected health information in the "extended outsourcing environment," says Chris Gray, assistant vice president of cybersecurity at security firm Deepwatch.

"Perimeters have been shattered, and extended telehealth/reporting/intake services open up the attack surface," he says.

"The healthcare industry needs more security resources. If the number of defenders remains status quo, while the attack surface grows and more sophisticated 'hacking tools' become freely available, then we'd expect more breaches and impact."

	Michael Hamilton, CISO of security firm Critical Insight and former CISO of the city of Seattle, offers a similar assessment. "I do not see these trends changing until the market economics change around records theft and monetization," he says.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Viral post: 46 days off using 19 days of PTO
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/how-get-46-days-off-2023-using-only-19-days-pto/TARVECTDMRH5JH52O6RL6NUVLY/
GIST	<p>A viral social post outlining how to get nearly a month-and-a-half off in 2023 by using only 19 days of paid time off had people scrambling for their calendars this week.</p> <p>The post, which appears to have originated on Instagram from @mba_ish, has generated over 300,000 likes after it was reshared on Twitter.</p> <p>All of the following dates are for 2023: According to the post, if you take the Thursday (Jan. 12) and Friday (Jan. 13) before Martin Luther King Jr. Day (Monday, Jan. 16), you will get five days off and only use two days of PTO.</p> <p>In April, if you take Monday (Apr. 3) through Thursday (Apr. 6) off before Good Friday (Apr. 7), you will get 10 days off and only use four days of PTO. Those 10 days include Saturday (Apr. 1), Sunday (Apr. 2), Saturday (Apr. 8), Sunday (Apr. 9) and Easter Monday (Apr. 10).</p> <p>In July, if you take Monday (July 3) off, you will get four days off and only use one day of PTO. Those four days would include Saturday (July 1), Sunday (July 2) and Independence Day (July 4).</p> <p>In November, if you take Monday (Nov. 13) through Friday (Nov. 17) off and Monday (Nov. 20) through Wednesday (Nov. 22) off, you will get 17 consecutive days off and only use eight days of PTO. This accounts for Veteran's Day on Friday (Nov. 10), Saturday (Nov. 11), Sunday (Nov. 12), Saturday (Nov. 18), Sunday (Nov. 19), Thanksgiving (Nov. 23), Black Friday (Nov. 24), Saturday (Nov. 25) and Sunday (Nov. 26).</p> <p>In December, if you take Tuesday (Dec. 26) through Friday (Dec. 29) off, you will get 10 consecutive days off and only use four days of PTO. These dates include Saturday (Dec. 23), Sunday (Dec. 24), Christmas (Dec. 25), Saturday (Dec. 30), Sunday (Dec. 31) and New Year's Day (Jan. 1, 2024).</p> <p>Available PTO and holidays will vary by employer.</p> <p>The original post, which said '18' days, has been corrected after adding up the days.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Meta violated WA campaign finance laws
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/facebook-parent-company-fined-25m-for-wa-campaign-finance-violations/
GIST	<p>Meta, Facebook's parent company, was fined nearly \$25 million Wednesday for intentionally and repeatedly violating Washington's campaign finance laws.</p> <p>King County Superior Court Judge Douglass North issued the maximum possible fine to the social media giant, after finding that the company had, between 2019 and 2021, violated Washington's longstanding political disclosure law 822 separate times.</p> <p>It is the largest campaign finance penalty ever issued anywhere in the country, Attorney General Bob Ferguson's office said.</p> <p>Each violation of the law is typically punishable by up to \$10,000, but since North found that Meta intentionally violated the law, the fines can be tripled.</p>

North fined Meta \$30,000 for each of its 822 violations.

Ferguson, who brought the case against Meta, had asked for the maximum possible fine after his office sued Facebook in 2018 for violating the same law.

“I have one word for Facebook’s conduct in this case — arrogance,” Ferguson said Wednesday. “It intentionally disregarded Washington’s election transparency laws. But that wasn’t enough. Facebook argued in court that those laws should be declared unconstitutional. That’s breathtaking. Where’s the corporate responsibility?”

“I urge Facebook to come to its senses, accept responsibility, apologize for its conduct and comply with the law,” Ferguson said. “If Facebook refuses to do this, we will beat them again in court.”

Ferguson’s office is also requesting that its attorneys’ fees be tripled, for a total of \$10.5 million. North will decide on that figure at a later date.

Meta declined to comment.

Washington’s transparency law, originally passed by voters through an initiative in 1972, requires ad sellers such as Meta to disclose the names and addresses of political ad buyers, the targets of such ads and the total number of views of each ad. Ad sellers must provide the information to anyone who asks for it.

Other sellers of political ads, including television stations and newspapers, have had to abide by the Washington requirements for decades.

In 2018, after Ferguson’s first lawsuit, Facebook [said it would stop selling political ads](#) in the state, rather than comply with the law. Google, similarly, said it would stop selling political ads in Washington.

But [they didn’t stop selling political ads](#). Google and Facebook both paid \$200,000 fines in 2018.

Ferguson [sued Facebook again in 2020](#).

Meta had [tried to have the case thrown out](#) and Washington’s campaign finance law declared unconstitutional, arguing it “unduly burdens political speech” and is “virtually impossible to fully comply with.”

But North found the company’s violations were intentional because of its history of failure to comply with the law, its extensive experience with campaign finance law and its “lack of good faith and failure to acknowledge and take responsibility for its violations.”

From 2019 to 2021, three people requested information from Meta about the political ads it was selling (even as it said it had stopped selling ads in Washington).

But Meta never provided these requesters with the information required by Washington law, North wrote. When it did provide information, it was insufficient, redacted, or weeks or months late, North wrote.

“Meta not only continued to solicit Washington Political Advertisements, but Meta was aware that its announced ‘ban’ would not, and did not, stop all such advertising from continuing to be displayed on its platform,” North wrote.

Meta, one of the world’s highest-valued companies, [reported revenue Wednesday of nearly \\$28 billion in the third quarter of this year](#), and a quarterly profit of \$4.39 billion.

HEADLINE	10/26 Pro-China disinformation: sow US discord
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/26/pro-china-disinformation-scheme-attempted-discourag/
GIST	<p>Cybersecurity firm Mandiant said Wednesday that a pro-China cyber group waged an aggressive influence campaign online that discouraged Americans from voting in the midterm elections and promoted clashes with the U.S government.</p> <p>Mandiant said it previously saw the “DRAGONBRIDGE” threat group trying to mobilize protesters in the U.S. and has now witnessed the group sowing division, plagiarizing and altering news articles, and adopting false personas on social media to spread disinformation.</p> <p>“Most notably, in September 2022, DRAGONBRIDGE accounts posted an English-language video across multiple social media platforms containing content attempting to discourage Americans from voting in the upcoming U.S. midterm elections,” Mandiant said in a new report. “The video questioned the efficacy of voting and of U.S. government institutions more broadly.”</p> <p>Mandiant said the video argued the solution was not to vote but to “root out this ineffective and incapacitated system” over an image of the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol.</p> <p>“The campaign also pointed to frequent mentions of ‘civil war’ on social media and incidents of politically motivated violence, including confrontations between individuals supporting opposing parties and acts against the FBI, as evidence of the deterioration of the political process and its impending demise,” the report said.</p> <p>Alongside lambasting American democracy, the group also sought to manipulate news reports and cyber research to make it appear as though Chinese hackers were actually doing America’s bidding.</p> <p>The group claimed the APT41 hacking group was developed by the U.S. government in posts on Twitter, according to Mandiant. The FBI has identified APT41 as Chinese hackers that also use the name Barium. Mandiant has described APT41 as a group that combines state-sponsored cyberespionage with financially motivated cybercrime targeting a range of sectors from healthcare to media.</p> <p>The DRAGONBRIDGE effort plagiarized a Radio Free Asia news article and altered it to describe the cyberattackers as a “U.S. hacking group,” according to Mandiant.</p> <p>“Accounts plagiarized, altered, and otherwise mischaracterized news reporting and research from Mandiant and other cybersecurity organizations to support their allegations,” Mandiant’s report said.</p> <p>“Such narratives appear to be a continuation of themes alleging malicious U.S. cyber activity that we have seen DRAGONBRIDGE promote since at least April 2022.”</p> <p>The DRAGONBRIDGE effort also used accounts impersonating Intrusion Truth, a group known for exposing Chinese hackers online.</p> <p>Mandiant vice president of intelligence analysis John Hultquist said in a statement that the DRAGONBRIDGE effort did not appear fully successful but he was troubled by their aggressive growth.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 DHS emails: Feds monitoring tweets
SOURCE	https://gizmodo.com/twitter-abortion-rights-roe-v-wade-1849703829
GIST	<p>The Department of Homeland Security has its eyes online. Following the Supreme Court’s overturn of Roe v. Wade, the agency took to Twitter to monitor the public response, according to a report from Bloomberg that references internal DHS emails obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request.</p>

“We have all the Districts on standby for the potential *Roe v. Wade* SCOTUS decision that may be released today,” a DHS supervisor reportedly wrote in one email. The message went on to urge agents to coordinate with their [fusion centers](#)—state-run hubs for police information sharing that track “threats.”

The notion of federal agents keeping tabs on social media shouldn’t be particularly surprising. After all, the FBI has been open about its interest [in social media monitoring](#) for years. Local police forces [also surveil posts](#). And Homeland Security itself [started collecting](#) a wide array of online data (including social media activity) on immigrants back in 2017.

Yet the emails present another glimpse into how DHS approaches online anger. In the aftermath of the nationwide rollback of abortion rights protections, the agency was focused on internet decorum. And, in at least one case, the feds took their concern from the web to IRL.

Madeline Walker, a woman living in North Texas, received a home visit [from a DHS agent](#) (and potentially multiple police officers) after [posting an angry tweet](#) in the wake of the SCOTUS decision.

“Burn every fucking government building down right the fuck now. Slaughter them all. Fuck you god damn pigs,” Walker allegedly wrote in the now-deleted tweet. Six days later, the law enforcement officers that showed up at her door came bearing a letter from Joshua Henry, a DHS special agent at the Threat Management Branch.

“You are advised...to cease and desist in any conduct deemed harassing/threatening in nature, when communication to or about the federal government,” the letter said. “Failure to comply with this request could result in the filing of criminal charges.”

The FOIA request central to Wednesday’s Bloomberg article, filed by reporter Jack Gillum, was specifically for the email communications of the DHS official that showed up at Walker’s door. And the resulting messages confirm that federal agents went back and forth discussing the contents of Walker’s social media. One agent noted, “[her] social media is flowing with threatening and inappropriate comments towards federal facilities and police.” Other officials expressed that Walker deserved a “knock and talk.”

Notably, Walker’s twitter handle (@budweiserbreath) doesn’t contain her legal name, nor does her account profile display any other clear identifying information (though it does note her general location in Dallas, Texas). Bloomberg reported that it’s unclear how DHS tracked Walker down. However, if Twitter provided information to law enforcement, it certainly [wouldn’t be the first time](#) a social media company has done so. The social media company did not immediately respond to Gizmodo’s request for comment.

[Return to Top](#)

Terrorism, Extremism

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Significant rise domestic terrorism probes
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/justice/significant-portion-rise-domestic-terrorism-stems-capitol-riot-fbi-dhs
GIST	<p>The FBI and the Department of Homeland Security revealed that a “significant” part of the massive rise in domestic terrorism investigations between 2020 and 2021 is related to the Justice Department’s investigation into the Capitol riot.</p> <p>The bureau and the DHS revealed the FBI was conducting approximately 1,400 pending domestic terrorism investigations as of the end of fiscal 2020 and was conducting roughly 2,700 domestic terrorism investigations by the end of fiscal 2021 — an increase of 1,300 domestic terrorism cases.</p>

The [newly released](#) strategic and intelligence assessment on domestic terrorism released this week revealed that “a significant portion” of the 2021 investigations “were directly related to the unlawful activities during the January 2021 siege on the U.S. Capitol.”

The new report said the FBI arrested approximately 180 domestic terrorism subjects in 2020, while it arrested roughly 800 such subjects in 2021.

The DHS and FBI report included a summary of the Capitol riot investigation, stating that “more than 725 individuals were arrested” by the end of last year. The report indicated that “more than 225 subjects were charged with assaulting, resisting, or impeding officers or employees” by the end of 2021 and that “approximately 640 subjects were charged with entering or remaining in a restricted federal building or grounds” while “dozens of subjects were charged with conspiracy.”

The Justice Department [said](#) this week that more than 880 people have been arrested in relation to the Capitol riot in the 21 months since the event, including more than 270 defendants charged with assaulting or impeding law enforcement. The DOJ said that “the investigation remains ongoing.”

“One of the most significant terrorism threats to the Homeland we face today is posed by lone offenders and small groups of individuals who commit acts of violence motivated by a range of ideological beliefs and/or personal grievances,” the new FBI and DHS report concluded. “Of these actors, domestic violent extremists represent one of the most persistent threats to the United States today.”

The new report said the FBI received approximately 5,669 referrals of possible domestic terrorism incidents in 2020, while it received roughly 8,375 such referrals in 2021. The FBI passed along approximately 1,287 possible domestic terrorism incidents to federal, state, or local partners in 2021, while it made roughly 1,399 such referrals in 2021.

The eGuardian system is the FBI’s case management system, and the bureau said it converted approximately 747 Guardian incidents to preliminary or full domestic terrorism investigations in 2020, while it did the same for roughly 1,525 in 2021.

The new report also provided a breakdown of the types of domestic terrorism investigations in 2020, compared to 2021.

The FBI said “racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism” made up 40% of domestic terrorism investigations in 2020 and 19% in 2021, “anti-government or anti-authority violent extremism” made up 37% of such investigations in 2020 and 38% in 2021, and “anti-riot laws / civil unrest” made up 17% of investigations in 2020 versus 31% in 2021.

Large protests swept across the U.S. in the summer of 2020 following the death of George Floyd, often accompanied by rioting, looting, arson, and violence, while the Capitol riot occurred on Jan. 6, 2021. Republicans have [repeatedly argued](#) the Justice Department has prioritized Capitol riot prosecutions over investigations into 2020’s riots.

“Those involved must be held accountable, and there is no higher priority for us at the Department of Justice,” Garland [said](#) of the Capitol riot just before its anniversary in January, calling the inquiry “one of the largest, most complex, and most resource-intensive investigations in our history.”

Matt Olsen, the assistant attorney general in charge of the DOJ’s National Security Division, announced the creation of a [new “domestic terrorism unit”](#) in January.

Jill Sanborn, the executive assistant director of the FBI’s national security branch, referred to “2020 and the violence that we all saw around the peaceful protests” during January testimony and said [the bureau had opened “slightly more than 800 cases”](#) related to domestic terrorism tied to the 2020 riots.

	Sanborn is appearing for a transcribed interview with the House Judiciary Committee in December to discuss the FBI's handling of domestic terrorism cases.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 Embassies' terror alerts for South Africa
SOURCE	https://businesstech.co.za/news/trending/638479/uk-france-canada-and-australia-embassies-issue-alerts-after-terrorism-warning-in-south-africa/
GIST	<p>While the South African government has moved to downplay threats of a possible terrorist attack in the country, the embassies of the United Kingdom, France, Canada and Australia are following the advice from the United States and warning their citizens to steer clear of crowds in Sandton this weekend.</p> <p>The alerts follow warnings from the US embassy on Wednesday (26 October) that terrorist attacks might take place in Sandton this coming weekend.</p> <p>The UK embassy warned its citizens to steer clear of the greater Sandton area on 29 and 30 October, while the Australian embassy has South Africa at a level 2 travel warning, cautioning travellers to be aware of heightened levels of violent crime.</p> <p>The UK's travel guidance for South Africa noted that "terrorists are likely to try to carry out attacks in South Africa". It warned that attacks could be indiscriminate and could occur in places visited by foreigners, such as shopping areas.</p> <p>As with the UK and Australia, the High Commission of Canada in South Africa and the French embassy in the country followed suit with their own security update on the situation, citing the US embassy alert.</p> <p>The US embassy on Wednesday warned that it had received information that terrorists may be planning to conduct an attack on large gatherings in the greater Sandton area over the coming weekend.</p> <p>"The US government has received information that terrorists may be planning to conduct an attack targeting large gatherings of people at an unspecified location in the greater Sandton area of Johannesburg, South Africa, on 29 October," the embassy said in the statement.</p> <p>The embassy advised its staff to avoid crowds of people and other large public gatherings in the specified area over the coming weekend.</p> <p>While the South African government has acknowledged the alert, it has downplayed the severity, saying that it is constantly monitoring threats. It said that it has been given no information that points to evidence of a credible threat.</p> <p>The government said it would urgently inform South Africans of immediate threats should the need arise.</p> <p>Citing unnamed sources within the intelligence community, News24 reported that potential targets for the terrorist attacks include gay pride events, a two-week theatre show staged by Jewish comedian Nik Rabinowitz, and peace talks between warring Ethiopian parties currently underway. Seven individuals aligned with the Islamic State (ISIS) have reportedly been identified.</p> <p>Responding to the warning, Sandton City owner Liberty Two Degrees said that businesses in the area are on high alert and monitoring the situation. Businesses are currently operating as normal.</p> <p>Who do we listen to?</p> <p>Senior Training Coordinator at ENACT Programme at the Institute for Security Studies, Willem Els, told the SABC that the first thing we should do in a situation like this is not panic.</p> <p>"We should be calm and analyse this whole situation in a calm manner," he said.</p>

Els said that it is not always the case that information can be verified, and sometimes the information that comes through is “few and far apart”.

“It does not mean that there will not be an attack – but in a situation like this, you have to deal with it in the same way you deal with a bomb scare,” he said.

“When there is a bomb scare, you don’t know if there is a bomb. So you take the necessary precautions, you take the people away (from the area) without panic, and if the bomb detonates, it mitigates the damage. If the bomb doesn’t detonate, then nothing is lost.”

He pointed out that in the history of South Africa, the country has only had one bomb scare that turned out to be positive. “But we still deal with each and every one as if there is a bomb.”

Els said it is difficult to know exactly which authority to trust for the latest and most accurate security information.

He said that in 2021 and over the last year, the country experienced that its intelligence services were not really up to the task, referring to the complete intelligence breakdown during the July 2021 riots and alleged insurrection.

“They did not really manage to gather all the information. That may not be the case here, but it is a possibility,” he said.

On the other hand, foreign missions have the mandate to take care of their citizenry. “We know that several foreign missions picked up on this – if we (South Africa) picked up on credible threats in other countries, we would follow the same route (of issuing alerts).

Els said that the country will have to see South African intelligence services engage with foreign services – “and we hope that they will all share information and make South Africa safer”.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Financial landscape domestic terrorism
SOURCE	https://www.mondaq.com/unitedstates/money-laundering/1244548/domestic-terrorism-understanding-the-threat-and-how-banks-can-counter-it
GIST	<p>Domestic terrorism is not a new threat in America, but in recent years we have seen a significant and horrific increase in violent attacks and activities carried out by individuals and groups motivated by a range of radical ideologies. In response to these troubling developments, our government has stepped up law enforcement, intelligence attention, and resources to combat these threats. Financial institutions can be vital to this effort, just as they played a critical role after 9/11 in helping to identify terrorists, map out their support networks, and enhance the effectiveness of targeted financial sanctions.</p> <p>The Domestic Terrorism Landscape</p> <p>U.S. authorities also refer to domestic terrorists as "domestic violent extremists," or "DVEs," as distinguishable from (1) "Homegrown Violent Extremists," or "HVEs," who operate with direction or inspiration from a foreign terrorist group or other foreign power, and (2) individuals engaged solely in activities theoretically protected by the First Amendment or other rights secured by the U.S. Constitution. The U.S. Intelligence Community categorizes DVEs into five areas, noting that some draw upon or are inspired by ideological themes found in other threat categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremists2. Anti-Government/Anti-Authority Violent Extremists3. Animal Rights/Environmental Violent Extremists4. Abortion-Related Violent Extremists5. All Other Domestic Terrorism Threats

The two most lethal elements of today's domestic terrorism threat are (1) racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists (RMVEs)-most notably those who advocate for the superiority of the white race, such as the Buffalo and El Paso shooters, and (2) anti-government or anti-authority violent extremists-most notably militia violent extremists (MVEs) such as members of the Oath Keepers militia who stormed the Capitol on January 6, 2021. According to the U.S. Intelligence Community, RMVEs are most likely to conduct mass-casualty attacks against civilians and MVEs will typically target law enforcement and government personnel and facilities.

Domestic Terrorist Financing

While domestic terrorist attacks are most often perpetrated by self-funded "lone-wolf" actors, DVEs use a variety of methods to raise, move, and spend funds. The most extensive and insightful information available on DVE financing is from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which published a report in June 2021 on [Ethnically or Racially Motivated Terrorist Financing](#). The report was the outcome of a project undertaken by a team from 13 countries and seven international organizations. It was led by representatives from the United States and Germany, and drew from case studies and other input from over 30 jurisdictions. Its findings serve as a useful starting point for understanding domestic terrorist financing tactics and typologies, including the following seven categories of funding sources, four methods for the movement of funds, and four types of expenditures.

Sources of Funding

1. Self-financing

Self-financing-usually through employment income or savings-is a significant source of funds for DVEs, according to the 2022 National Terrorist Financing Risk Assessment from the U.S. Department of the Treasury (Treasury). The vast majority of RMVE attacks in recent history have been perpetrated by self-funded individuals, according to the FATF report. This presents a challenge for financial institutions because the transactional activity is unlikely to look different than the customer's expected activity, based on risk profile.

2. Donations from Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding allows DVE groups to collect funds from individuals who share their ideology and are located beyond their local community or even country. In response to a FATF questionnaire, multiple jurisdictions highlighted crowdfunding as one of the common methods for RMVE groups to openly gather funding. This method is popular among such groups as they tend to engage in a high level of online activity through social media, forums, gaming chatrooms, and other internet platforms. Terrorist financing risks associated with crowdfunding have been publicly identified by FATF since 2015 and have recently drawn attention from national authorities as well as non-profit counter-DVE organizations, most notably in the wake of the January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol.

3. Private Donations

DVE groups also commonly generate funds through private donations, in some cases based on direct contact between the donors and the recipient and in other cases by soliciting funding on their websites or social networks, including through private messengers with restricted access. According to the FATF report, solicitations normally contain the identifiers of a financial instrument (bank account, e-wallet, etc.) controlled by the actor or his associates, and increasing allow for use of virtual assets that enable the financier to maintain pseudonymity.

4. Membership Fees

Another common fundraising method for DVE groups is collecting membership fees. Unlike crowdfunding and donations, both of which are forms of voluntary support, fees collected from members are sometimes mandatory. According to the FATF report, some RMVE groups collect membership fees in cash or by using bank accounts held at local or regional financial institutions, and this funding source appears to be more common across sophisticated RMVE with a more formal organization structure.

5. Commercial Activities

Many DVE groups raise money through commercial activities such as merchandise sales, organized music festivals and other events, and real estate. In addition to providing income, these activities often facilitate the promotion of their ideology and help with recruitment and networking. A number of jurisdictions reported to FATF the sale of merchandise online and at live events-including clothing, books, mugs, and other goods, typically with extremist logos and symbols-to be an important source of income for RMVE groups. In Europe, music concerts and festivals have been particularly popular fundraising events for RMVE groups, and some DVEs have also generated income by renting real estate and by owning and managing restaurants and pubs.

6. Criminal Activities

Though most of the funding for DVE groups appears to come from ostensibly licit sources, DVEs have also used a variety of other illicit methods to generate revenue to fund their activities. According to Treasury's 2022 National Terrorist Financing Risk Assessment, some DVEs have used theft, fraud, and drug trafficking to generate revenue.

7. Abuse of NPOs

Transnational terrorist organizations have long abused non-profit organizations (NPOs) as a cover to raise and move funds, recruit and radicalize personnel, and provide logistical and other support. While there is limited literature discussing the abuse of NPOs by DVEs, the risk of such activity is present especially given the presence of numerous private foundations that are ideologically aligned and otherwise affiliated with DVE groups. Although these foundations may not openly support violence, in some instances they could provide material or other support to DVE groups or indirect support to DVE recruitment by financing books or research that supports DVE ideology.

Movement of Funds

DVE groups have traditionally been less concerned with concealing their transactions than international terrorist groups, and in general have left a larger financial footprint in the formal financial system. In some cases, they have held accounts in their own names and referenced group names and symbolism in transactions. At the same time, there is an emerging trend across the DVE community suggesting they are becoming more skilled at disguising their financial activities. For example, some DVE groups structure their transactions to avoid reporting thresholds, likely in response to increased attention and scrutiny from law enforcement.

1. Financial Institutions

DVE groups and their leaders have used financial institutions (FIs) more frequently to store and move funds than transnational terrorists, likely because their activities have historically not been considered illegal. Some countries that provided input for the FATF report were able to identify transfers through FIs to and from RMVE group leaders based on the analysis of financial links between the groups. Others noted that sometimes individuals belonging to RMVE groups have used bank accounts of their family members instead of their own accounts to wire payments.

U.S. authorities also refer to domestic terrorists as "domestic violent extremists," or "DVEs," as distinguishable from (1) "Homegrown Violent Extremists," or "HVEs," who operate with direction or inspiration from a foreign terrorist group or other foreign power, and (2) individuals engaged solely in activities theoretically protected by the First Amendment or other rights secured by the U.S. Constitution.

2. Money Services Businesses

According to Treasury's 2022 National Terrorist Financing Risk Assessment, DVEs have gravitated toward online Money Services Businesses (MSBs) and other payment platforms and services that facilitate electronic funds transfers (such as those described in the context of crowdsourcing described above). Given the growing number of transnational connections between RMVEs in the U.S. and abroad, transactions between such individuals and groups are likely to flow through MSBs given their dominance of the international remittance space.

3. Cash

Cash is one of the most dominant methods by which RMVE groups transfer funds, according to the FATF report. Whether a group raises funds via wire transfers or cash, a significant portion is typically withdrawn to be used as cash. There have been instances of DVEs using cash to purchase weapons, tactical gear, or other material to support planned attacks or paramilitary training being conducted in preparation for a violent act, according to the U.S. Treasury Department. While most of these individuals reportedly continue to use credit or debit cards or other electronic payment methods for purchases, some DVE networks believe that using cash allows for increased anonymity and reduces the chance of drawing law enforcement scrutiny.

4. Virtual Assets

U.S. authorities have identified several instances where DVE groups and their financial supporters solicited funds in virtual assets, usually through a social media platform or other internet-based crowdsource platform. According to FATF, as financial services companies have started to refuse to process payments on their websites linked to RMVE groups for violating terms of service on hate speech, some groups have moved to using virtual assets like Bitcoin to move funds, and some RMVE groups have used so called "privacy coins"-virtual assets that allow a user to maintain anonymity when making blockchain transactions.

Use of Funds

Similar to international terrorist groups, DVEs have been found to use funds for various activities, including:

1. **Support for attacks, including purchasing weapons and ammunition:** Domestic terrorism attacks in recent years have generally followed the typical "lone actor" scenario with perpetrators using self-funding to buy firearms and ammunition using credit cards or cash.
2. **Propaganda, recruitment, and networking:** Unlike individual actors, DVE groups spend money for propaganda, recruitment of new members, organizing events, and maintaining websites that support and promote their views. Some DVE groups also use funding to train members, including in shooting and martial arts.
3. **Real estate purchases:** In recent years, DVE groups have increasingly invested funds to purchase real estate, according to FATF. Groups have used such properties to open businesses like restaurants and pubs, to host internal meetings, and to network and spread ideas.
4. **Training, purchases and acquisition of equipment:** According to the Treasury Department, U.S. authorities have identified financial activity from some DVE groups like "The Base," an antisemitic, white nationalist network that trains members in survivalism and paramilitary skills to prepare them to mount an armed resistance against the government. The Base may have sought to purchase property so they can facilitate paramilitary-style training, to include learning how to make improvised explosive devices, for members or other like-minded individuals.

The Role of Banks: What Compliance Should Focus on to Help

Financial institutions have an important role to play in countering the elevated threat of domestic terrorism. As proven in the years since 9/11, FIs are in the unique position to help the government with three key lines of effort:

- Finding terrorists;
- Mapping out organizational structures and support networks; and
- Enhancing the effectiveness and impact of targeted financial sanctions.

The U.S. government has formulated its counter DVE strategy with these factors in mind. There are several areas compliance officers can focus on now and actions they can take in the short term to begin helping our nation address the issue of domestic violent extremism. However, it can be a difficult challenge since many of the transactions involved do not stand out from normal, everyday transactions of the average customer.

1. Screen for DVEs Designated by the U.S.

In 2020, the State Department designated the Russian Imperial Movement (RIM) and three of its leaders as "Specially Designated Global Terrorists" (SDGTs), the first time in history the U.S. government has designated a white supremacist terrorist group. The Treasury Department followed suit in mid-2022 by

designating two RIM members, one who has raised money for the group online and the other who has travelled to the U.S. to establish connections between RIM and other far-right extremist and white nationalist groups.

Most compliance teams are familiar with this drill and have implemented sanctions-related policies and procedures for screening customers and transactions and as appropriate escalating, blocking, and reporting on RIM-related designation targets. Compliance should anticipate the rollout of additional DVE-related designations as the Biden administration is under pressure from Congress and counter-extremism advocacy groups to do more, and the State and Treasury Departments have sent strong public messages that they intend to do more in this area.

The challenge here is that current U.S. law does not provide for sanctions against domestic terrorists. However, that may change as Congress focuses on some of the threats presented, particularly after the attacks on the Capitol on January 6, 2021.

2. Screen for DVEs Designated by Non-U.S. Authorities.

U.S. persons are protected by the First Amendment or other rights secured by the U.S. Constitution. Therefore, U.S. authorities are significantly more limited in their ability to impose sanctions or other legal measures against persons associated with DVEs than with foreign terrorist organizations. However, nine DVE groups located in or with ties to America have been designated and sanctioned by other jurisdictions, including Canada, U.K., Germany, Australia, and New Zealand. These include:

- Aryan Strikeforce
- Atomwaffen Division
- Blood and Honour
- Combat 18
- Feuerkrieg Division
- Proud Boys
- Sonnenkrieg Division
- The Base
- Three Percenters

As a best practice, these groups should be included in negative news screening to identify potentially suspicious actors involved in DVE. While banks are not required under U.S. law to block property and prohibit transactions in which these entities have an interest, information related to such groups could be valuable financial intelligence for U.S. authorities for the reasons described above. And, banks have been increasingly willing to terminate account relationships with some of these organizations as incompatible with the bank's terms of service agreements.

3. Become a Counter Violent Extremism Analyst.

Compliance officers who are serious about their role in countering domestic terrorism should make an effort to learn about DVE groups and sharpen their open-source research and analytical skills, including by incorporating social media research and specialized online DVE tools and resources into their investigations. They should apply their knowledge and skills in a broad way, and when the opportunity arises, identify and produce high-quality leads and reports useful to national security analysts and agents.

Tactical actions that can be taken in this regard include the following:

- Develop an appropriate risk assessment about the potential for domestic terrorism based on the bank's unique profile.
- Become familiar with designated DVE groups and leaders by reading U.S. and foreign government press releases announcing the designations. Also review profiles about the designation targets written by think tanks, NGOs, international organizations, and investigative journalists. Pay particular attention to information about their location, fundraising, and other activities that may relate to your institution's business profile. Conduct additional screening, as appropriate, based on the research, and report any findings to the U.S. government.
- Get trained on open source (publicly available) data exploitation, social media and dark-web research, and sanctions evasion techniques and typologies to better conduct enhanced due diligence and other targeted investigations.

- When domestic terrorist attacks and incidents occur, proactively search names of the perpetrators/suspects and known associates across customers and transaction holding (and add to filters for future customers/transactions), and share findings with the U.S. government.
- Search names of known non-designated violent extremist groups leaders across customers and transaction holdings (and add to filters for future customers/transactions), and share findings with the U.S. government.

4. Focus on Enhancing Private-Public Sector Partnerships

The [U.S. Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism](#) places an emphasis on public-private sector partnerships, especially with the financial sector. Compliance officers should actively participate in such fora and get to know key federal, state, and local law enforcement officials (as well as other private sector compliance professionals) involved in countering violent extremism. They can bring additional value to such partnerships by proactively filing high-quality suspicious activity reports (SARs) and by being prepared, thorough, and responsive to requests from law enforcement. Three primary approaches for doing this are:

- **Direct outreach from the FBI and other law enforcement agencies:** The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has the lead for U.S. counterterrorism investigations, including those involving DVEs. Requests from FBI can be particularly critical and time-sensitive. To best assist with these questions FIs must:
 - Know their customers by their real names and possess other essential identifying information;
 - Have the ability to access this information in a timely fashion; and
 - Quickly provide this information to the government in a format in which it can be effectively used.
- **FinCEN's 314(a) program:** Pursuant to Section 314(a) of the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001, FinCEN provides a unique service to law enforcement to help locate financial assets and recent transactions by subjects of criminal investigations. In practice, this process enables law enforcement to find out if an individual of interest has accounts or has conducted transactions in any one of thousands of financial institutions across the country. It saves an investigator hundreds of hours that would have otherwise been spent on a bank-by-bank inquiry.
- **SAR Review Teams:** SAR Review Teams bring together federal, state, and local law enforcement officials, prosecutors, and regulators from across a jurisdiction to proactively seek out criminal activity suggested in SAR narratives and engage in enhanced collaboration and information-sharing with financial institutions. There are SAR Review Teams in well over 100 locations throughout the country, and many meet regularly with bank compliance officers to discuss priority illicit financing issues.

5. Build Domestic Terrorism Typologies and Red Flags into AML Risk Management Program

In mid-2021, FinCEN identified domestic terrorism as one of eight AML/CFT national priorities. Compliance officers should be on the lookout for regulations and guidance from FinCEN that will specify how FIs should incorporate domestic terrorism (and the other priorities) into their risk-based AML programs. Until then, one resource that provides some guidance worth considering is the [2021 U.S. Violent Extremist Mobilization Indicators](#) booklet. The resource provides a catalog of observable behaviors that could signal whether individuals or groups are pursuing ideologically motivated violent extremist activities. The following indicators drawn from that publication could serve as financial typologies, methodologies, and red flags for FIs to consider:

1. Outside pattern of life activities such as "out of the blue" firearm or ammunition purchases. This could be a new behavior entirely or a significantly larger quantity than normal.
2. Surprise travel or one-way tickets if not consistent with previous pattern of life activities.
3. Sending or receiving unexpected dollar amounts to or from parties not seen in previous transactions for unexplained purposes.
4. Purchase indicating concealment tactics such as vendors that sell burner phones.
5. Transactions to or from designated or otherwise known DVE groups or leaders, or such persons referenced in the text field of a check or wire transfer.

	<p>Additional background and social media research on suspicious parties is highly encouraged by law enforcement, and any findings of interest should be detailed in SAR narratives. Information of particular interest includes social media posts advocating or supporting violence or providing indications about the structure or hierarchy of an organization.</p> <p>Conclusion</p> <p>Domestic terrorism is a threat to the U.S. financial system, and it is important for all compliance professionals to understand the risks. Compliance must ensure governmental priorities are incorporated into their financial institutions' risk-based (AML) programs.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Michigan governor kidnap plotters guilty
SOURCE	https://news.yahoo.com/three-men-convicted-terrorism-plotting-164716778.html
GIST	<p>Three more men were convicted on Wednesday on terrorism and gang charges of terrorism over the foiled plot to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.</p> <p>A jury in Jackson County found Joseph Morrison, Paul Bellar, and Pete Musico guilty on all charges, including providing material support for terrorist attacks and gang membership.</p> <p>The trio were founding members of a far-right paramilitary group, the Wolverine Watchmen, and had plotted with other men to kidnap the Democratic governor and hold a sham "treason" trial for her in response to her pandemic lockdowns.</p> <p>They had hoped the kidnapping would trigger a civil war or "boogaloo."</p> <p>Using informants and undercover agents, the plot was foiled by the FBI in October 2020, resulting in Michigan prosecutors filing charges against some of the men and federal authorities filing charges against others.</p> <p>"Make no mistake, the quick actions of law enforcement saved lives," Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel said in a statement on Wednesday. "We are pleased the jury clearly understood that."</p> <p>"These defendants believed violence was an appropriate way to address an ideological grievance," said FBI spokesperson Special Agent Mara Schneider. "Today's verdict sends a clear message they were wrong."</p> <p>The trio will be sentenced on Dec. 15.</p> <p>In August, two other men involved in the plot, leader Adam Fox and Barry Croft, were convicted in federal court on charges of conspiracy to commit kidnapping and conspiracy to use a weapon of mass destruction.</p> <p>Two other men, Daniel Harris and Brandon Caserta, were acquitted in April.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Canada police arrest Syria returnees
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/canada-police-arrest-syria-returnee-terrorism-related-charges-2022-10-26/
GIST	<p>OTTAWA, Oct 26 (Reuters) - Canadian police said on Wednesday they had arrested a woman on her return to Canada after 5 years in detention by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) for allegedly working for the Islamic State.</p> <p>Oumaima Chouay, 27, was arrested at the Montreal-Trudeau airport Tuesday night and charged with four terrorism-related offences, including "participation in activity of terrorist group," the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) in Quebec said in a statement.</p>

Chouay left Canada in 2014 and was suspected of participating in "terrorist activities" in the name of Islamic State before her arrest by the SDF in November 2017, police said.

A representative for Chouay could not immediately be found for comment.

She was one of two women returning from Syria. The other, Kimberly Polman, 50, arrived in Montreal Wednesday morning and was also subsequently arrested, her lawyer Lawrence Greenspon said.

Polman was not facing criminal charges, her lawyer said. The RCMP in British Columbia, where Polman is from, did not respond to multiple emails and phone calls seeking comment.

Canada's foreign ministry confirmed four Canadians - two children and two women - had been repatriated from northeast Syria, and thanked the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria for its cooperation and the United States for assisting in the operation.

The detained individuals were under an "extremely difficult security situation and adverse circumstances," the foreign ministry said, without naming the individuals due to privacy considerations.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau declined to directly comment on the matter on Wednesday, but said "traveling for the purpose of supporting terrorism" was a crime and anyone who traveled for such a purpose should face criminal charges.

"It is important that we make sure that people know you cannot get away with supporting terrorism in this country, regardless of the circumstances," he told reporters.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 ISIS claims deadly attack in Iran: 15 killed
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/26/middleeast/iran-terror-attack-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>At least 15 people were killed and 40 others were injured Wednesday in a "terrorist attack" at the Shahcheragh Shrine in the city of Shiraz, southern Iran, according to state-run media and Iranian officials.</p> <p>Two children were among the victims, according to state-run Press TV.</p> <p>Iranian security forces have arrested two of the suspected attackers, and a manhunt is underway to capture a third, state news said.</p> <p>The terror group ISIS has claimed responsibility for the attack, releasing a statement through its affiliated Amaq news agency that said one of its members had "targeted groups of Sunni refusal infidels inside the shrine with his machine gun, causing the death of tens of them."</p> <p>Nour News Agency, which is affiliated with Iran's top security body, said the suspects were foreign nationals.</p> <p>Wednesday evening is one of the busiest times for the shrine, reported the state-run IRNA, and eyewitnesses said an attacker was in a car before targeting worshippers at its entrance.</p> <p>The governor of Fars province said that "the terrorist first targeted the servant and guard of the shrine, and intended to attack the congregational evening prayers, but one of the servants shut the door on him," state news said quoting the governor.</p> <p>"Loud screams were heard in the women's section of the shrine at the time of adhan [the call for prayer] and suddenly an armed man was spotted with a Kalashnikov firing indiscriminately in the compound of the shrine," an eyewitness told state media.</p> <p>"After the initial burst of fire, the attacker went near the shrine and fired many rounds at those present at the scene," the eyewitness added.</p>

	<p>The attack took place on the same day that clashes broke out throughout Iran as thousands of people came to the burial site of Mahsa Amini in Saqqez, a city in the Kurdistan province, to mark 40 days since her death, semi-official Iranian state news agency ISNA said. It's unclear if the attack was related to the protests.</p> <p>Protests have swept through the Islamic Republic following the death of the 22-year-old Kurdish Iranian woman, who died on September 16 after being detained by "morality police" and taken to a "re-education center," allegedly for not abiding by the country's conservative dress code.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/27 Extremists plot to attack energy sites?
SOURCE	https://www.newsweek.com/gas-prices-reshape-midterms-us-extremists-plot-attack-energy-sites-1754554
GIST	<p>As rising fuel costs threaten the political hopes of Democrats in the upcoming midterm elections, an ominous chorus of online chatter among domestic extremists in the dark corners of the Internet advocating attacks on critical infrastructure across the nation may pose an even greater threat to U.S. consumers.</p> <p><i>Newsweek</i> has obtained two documents that offer an insight into the scope of the threat, including reports of several actual attacks that have happened in past few months.</p> <p>The first is a corporate intelligence security memo detailing at least 15 instances over the course of just over a year showing suspected extremists openly threatening and calling for acts of sabotage against energy sites, especially electricity substations, but also including other targets such as cell towers and pipelines.</p> <p>The material included documents that could serve to help groups and individuals in carrying out such attacks, including maps, manuals and instructions on the vulnerabilities of electricity infrastructure and readily accessible methods to disrupt their operation. Those behind the posts, which were shared across various online platforms and chat rooms, expressed ties to a number of anti-government ideologies, mostly far-right and neo-Nazi beliefs, but also including eco-militancy and at least one user who shared messaging supportive of the Islamic State militant group (ISIS).</p> <p>A number of these same messages were featured in a second document obtained by <i>Newsweek</i>, an intelligence assessment issued this month by the California State Threat Assessment Center, which cited government intelligence reports prepared by the Department of Homeland Security, among other sources. This report went beyond simply exposing the desires of those seeking to do harm to also include recent notable incidents of groups or individuals acting out on such fantasies. This included an act of vandalism causing "fairly significant" damage at a transformer servicing the Keystone pipeline in South Dakota and a shooting that caused a chemical spill at a Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) site in California, both of which occurred this past July. In March, thousands of customers in southern Oklahoma were reportedly left without power after bullets riddled a transformer site, causing a "major oil leak."</p> <p>And in February, three men pled guilty to planning to recruit followers to attack electricity substations in a bid to take down the U.S. power grid, cost the government millions of dollars and "possibly spark a race war," the assessment found.</p> <p>"We assess that Domestic Violent Extremists (DVE) will likely remain a threat to the electricity subsector through 2023 as DVEs share more detailed information stated as authoritative to convince adherents that they have the requisite knowledge of targets, vulnerabilities, tools, and techniques to succeed," the assessment stated.</p> <p>The reports offer a glimpse into a murky world of largely anonymous individuals conspiring to undermine the power grid in furtherance of radical beliefs. Even the attacks that do take place, causing outages and damage, often go underreported.</p>

One high-profile exception is a still unresolved 2013 case, in which a seemingly organized group of perpetrators cut fiber optic cables and opened fire against a PG&E substation in Metcalf, California. Since then, there have been numerous shootings targeting energy infrastructure in various parts of the country, including incidents not included in the two reports, which detailed bigger and more destructive plans to plunge the U.S. into darkness.

Brian Harrell, who served as assistant secretary for infrastructure protection at the Department of Homeland Security from December 2018 to November 2020, is among those who have expressed concern over these threats.

"DVEs are looking to make an impact with media attention," Harrell told *Newsweek*. "Today, we see active targeting and nefarious discussions in all corners of the dark web and chat rooms. Given the criticality of the energy sector, it's no surprise they are a prime target. Thankfully, the sector has made significant investments and improvements to keep bad actors out of critical substations and other sites."

"The utility industry is aware of these threats due to our ongoing relationship with our National Security partners," he said, noting that measures were being taken to shore up defenses.

"While any threat is significant, companies have worked to build redundancy and resilience into the power grid," Harrell said. "Critical services that all Americans depend on should never be used as part of a domestic terrorism plot."

Manny Cancel, senior vice president of the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) and CEO of the Electricity Information Sharing and Analysis Center (E-ISAC), said the issue is also on his radar.

Cancel told *Newsweek* that, while E-ISAC is "currently is not aware of any specific threats to the bulk power system or electrical assets from domestic violent extremists, this is a serious threat and one that we actively monitor."

"Different extremist groups maintain a long-standing interest in disrupting the status quo through the use of vandalism and sabotage," Cancel added, "including promoting physical attacks on critical grid infrastructure, such as transmission towers, transformers, and substations, through online propaganda."

And though such efforts have been occurring for some time, he said "its continued promotion in the current environment is reason for concern," prompting E-ISAC to communicate on the issue with colleagues across the infrastructure sector, as well as law enforcement agencies such as the [FBI](#).

Concerns over potential acts of violence tied to the upcoming midterm elections have increased as Election Day nears, especially after former President [Donald Trump](#)'s rejection of the 2020 election results was followed by deadly riots that stormed the Capitol Building early last year. Counties have already begun to increase security at voting sites, but such dangers have the potential to manifest in a variety of ways.

Adding to the volatility of the situation, inflation and rising gas prices have proven top issues among voters, making energy sites an attractive target for groups and individuals seeking to cause mayhem at a politically sensitive time for the nation.

While Cancel said "we are not aware of any specific ties" between "energy volatility" and the ongoing stream of threats to energy sites, he pointed out that the election nonetheless served as an opportunity for those seeking to sow chaos.

"Given the current social and political environment the election represents, there is the potential for civil unrest and violence," Cancel said, "which is why the collaboration between government, law enforcement and critical infrastructure sectors remains crucial."

	Newsweek has reached out to the California State Threat Assessment Center and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for comment.
Return to Top	
HEADLINE	10/27 New Zealand guide: hot to spot terrorist
SOURCE	https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/300722135/how-to-spot-a-terrorist-nz-spy-service-releases-public-guidelines
GIST	<p>A public version of the NZ spy agency's indicators of violent extremism has been released to help people identify signs someone could be mobilising to violence.</p> <p>The guide, published online, has a variety of "early to late stage signs" an individual could be planning to execute a terrorist attack.</p> <p>It comes in the wake of an escalation in online violent rhetoric that spy boss Rebecca Kitteridge told Stuff in April would have been "unthinkable," just a few years ago, with the NZSIS tracking a "significant increase" in anti-authority violent rhetoric seen since Covid-19 health measures and restrictions.</p> <p>New Zealand's threat level is currently at medium, with a terrorist attack considered feasible and could well occur.</p> <p><i>Kia mataara ki ngā tohu – Know the signs: a guide for identifying signs of violent extremism</i> contains almost 50 indicators, grouped into seven themes: mindset and ideology, associations and relationships, research and planning, gathering knowledge and resources, preparation, security awareness, and unusual behaviour change.</p> <p>"We want to help New Zealanders feel reassured that their concerns are also likely to be our concerns. We hope they will then feel confident enough to share their information with us," NZ spy boss Rebecca Kitteridge said.</p> <p>"We know lone actors pose the most likely violent extremist threat. The public may be better placed than authorities to see that threat, particularly at its early stages."</p> <p>Examples of indicators include: praising known violent extremists, displaying imagery and symbols from violent extremist groups, developing a hostile "us vs them" world view, paying particular attention to security, and accessing instructional videos on making weapons.</p> <p>The guide is focused on behaviours and activities rather than ideologies, as the terrorist threat in NZ is constantly evolving, the spy agency said.</p> <p>The terrorism indicators were one of the recommendations of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attacks on Christchurch masjidain, after 51 people were killed by a lone terrorist on March 15, 2019.</p> <p>More than 20% of the SIS' investigations came from public tips, and Kitteridge previously told Stuff contact from the public was now regular. "That suggests that there has been extremism of motivation towards violence."</p> <p>Two key elements have surfaced in the New Zealand context – the ideologies themselves have morphed together, because of groups combining and merging online and "cherry-picking from a range of extremist views."</p> <p>The second element was the volume and tone of discussions in online forums, including mainstream social media, Kitteridge said. Violent threats were made frequently, especially online.</p> <p>The guide was based on an analysis of the behaviours observed during all New Zealand's terrorism-related incidents and investigations over the past 16 years.</p>

HEADLINE	10/27 Neo-Nazi community being built in Maine?
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/akeyxb/maine-neo-nazi-christopher-polhaus-white-ethnostate
GIST	<p>A neo-Nazi and ex-Marine coordinating an online movement to turn Maine into an all-white ethnostate, is building a property there—while also working with a violent extremist group in the region, VICE News has learned.</p> <p>Christopher Pohlhaus, 35, who goes by his online alias the “Hammer” and is a significant player in the broad universe of neo-Nazi Telegram, once commanded thousands of followers and a chat group that he called “The Camps.” Besides the Maine migration plan, he coordinated a nationwide racist counterprotest on the anniversary of George Floyd’s murder, explained to followers how to hypothetically dismantle the food-supply chain through sniper attacks on truckers, and was linked to the Jan. 6 attacker who allegedly stole a Nancy Pelosi staff laptop.</p> <p>In the past, some local Maine media downplayed the potential for Pohlhaus and his people moving to the state, despite the fact that it was already an attractive place for neo-Nazis as one of the whitest places in America and members of Pohlhaus’ online ecosystem already claimed to be there. But the fact an infamous neo-Nazi activist and organizer has physically moved to Maine—where he is said to be pursuing an all-white and racist community—is evidence of a strategy among the far-right to build exclusive spaces where they can promote their extremist ideologies and it can sometimes mean amassing weapons and ammunition for a future “race war.” For example, a similar movement of white nationalists is taking place in Idaho, where a MAGA faction in the Republican party there is aligning itself with open far-right extremists who are migrating to the state en-masse.</p> <p>VICE News met with the four-year Marine Corps veteran in person, near Norway, Maine, after Pohlhaus had recently moved from Arizona to meet up with a group of locals that he says he was already working with. Pohlhaus later shared a photo of a rudimentary building he had constructed in a forested location, and claimed there would be many more to come. In tandem with those efforts, he started an online funding drive asking for money to support “a retreat/community area we can train on and help families move to” in an unnamed area in Maine that has only raised a few hundred dollars.</p> <p>“I have a tight knit community of guys that, you know, we want to live near each other,” he said. “To make Maine a [Nazi] state would take very, very little effort and change to their mentality and the demographics of the state.”</p> <p>In recent weeks, Pohlhaus was caught pictured at an assembly of the group NSC-131—a neo-Nazi underground network with chapters all over New England that was founded by a former member of a designated terrorist group—in Lewiston. There, reportedly two dozen masked men, clad in black, marched with a racist banner targeting the city’s Somali community. Pohlhaus, who has a series of identifiable tattoos and a wrought-iron Swastika necklace, is seen in images from the march.</p> <p>Pohlhaus published video to Telegram of himself at the flash mob in Lewiston and another after, which were both obtained by VICE News through the Counter Extremism Project—a not-for-profit terrorism watchdog based in New York City. In the first video, he is clearly seen walking with other NSC-131 members, while in the second he makes a veiled threat to the Somali community of the city, demanding them to leave “my state” and adding “you don’t want to wait, until Mainers give us the greenlight.”</p> <p>“Nah, I just support those guys and offer a helping hand to the community wherever and whenever” said Pohlhaus via text, confirming his presence with the neo-Nazi group NSC-131 at the march, but clarified that he wasn’t a member of the group. The Anti-Defamation League has labeled NSC an extremist organization.</p> <p>Though Pohlhaus has often castigated other far-right activists for marching publicly and attending Jan. 6, members of NSC-131 previously bragged about attending the now infamous attack on Congress, and posted pictures of a stolen Capitol Hill Police riot helmet to their Telegram channel. Group founder Chris</p>

	<p>Hood, 23, is a former member of the Base, a neo-Nazi terrorist organization under a yearslong FBI probe, posted on Telegram the night before the Jan.6 rally under his known alias that “NSC New England is in Washington to ensure white safety.”</p> <p>According to Pohlhaus the FBI contacted him asking if he had attended the now-infamous riot on Capitol Hill, as some people linked to him had.</p> <p>“One time they asked me if I was at that fucking thing,” he said. “But I think everyone got visited by them. ‘Hey, were you at the January 6th thing’?”</p> <p>“I think everyone should be nervous about [the FBI].”</p> <p>Recent figures put the number of people charged for the Capitol Hill attacks on January 6 at 928 people thus far, including at least 160 people who, like Pohlhaus, had military backgrounds.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/25 US kills 2 al-Shabab militants in Somalia
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/world/us-forces-kill-two-al-shabaab-terrorists-airstrike-somalia-pentagon-says
GIST	<p>U.S. Africa Command carried out an airstrike on Sunday targeting al-Shabaab terrorists in coordination with the Somali government, the Pentagon said.</p> <p>The terrorists, two of whom were killed, had been attacking Somali National Army forces near Buulobarde, a city roughly 135 miles north of Mogadishu.</p> <p>No civilian casualties were reported, according to an initial assessment by U.S. Africa Command.</p> <p>The airstrike comes about three weeks after the U.S. military launched an airstrike in Somalia that took out Abdullahi Nadir, a top leader of what the Pentagon says is the "most kinetically active al-Qaeda network in the world."</p> <p>"U.S. Africa Command, alongside its partners, continues to take action to prevent this malicious terrorist group from planning and conducting attacks on civilians," the Pentagon said in a statement.</p> <p>Earlier this month, the State Department also placed sanctions on five al-Shabaab leaders believed to be responsible for terrorist attacks in Somalia and nearby African countries.</p> <p>President Biden redeployed several hundred Special Operations troops to Somalia in May after former President Trump withdrew them in December 2020.</p>
Return to Top	

Suspicious, Unusual

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Methane emissions rising faster than ever
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/10/26/united-nations-climate-pledges-report/
GIST	<p>The amount of methane in the atmosphere is racing ahead at an accelerating pace, according to a study by the World Meteorological Organization, threatening to undermine efforts to slow climate change.</p> <p>The WMO's Greenhouse Gas Bulletin said that “global emissions have rebounded since the COVID-related lockdowns” and that the increases in methane levels in 2020 and 2021 were the largest since systematic record keeping began in 1983.</p> <p>“Methane concentrations are not just rising, they’re rising faster than ever,” said Rob Jackson, a professor of Earth system science at Stanford University.</p>

The study comes on the same day as a new U.N. report that says the world's governments haven't committed to [cut enough carbon emissions](#), putting the world on track for a 2.5 degree Celsius (4.5 degree Fahrenheit) increase in global temperatures by the end of the century.

The analysis said the level of emissions implied by [countries' new commitments](#) was slightly lower than a year ago but would still lead to a full degree of temperature increase beyond the target level set at the most recent climate summits. To avert the most catastrophic consequences of climate change, scientists say, humanity must limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above preindustrial levels.

"Government decisions and actions must reflect the level of urgency, the gravity of the threats we are facing, and the shortness of the time we have remaining to avoid the devastating consequences of runaway climate change," said Simon Stiell, executive secretary of the U.N. Climate Change Secretariat. "We are still nowhere near the scale and pace of emission reductions required."

Instead, the U.N. report found, the world is barreling toward a future of unbearable heat, escalating weather disasters, collapsing ecosystems and widespread hunger and disease.

"It's a dismal, horrendous, incomprehensible picture," Inger Andersen, executive director of the U.N. Environment Program, said of the world's current warming path. "That picture is just not a picture we can accept."

The quickest way to affect the pace of global warming would be cutting emissions of methane, the second-largest contributor to climate change. It has a warming impact 80 times greater than carbon dioxide over a 20-year period. The WMO said the amount of methane in the atmosphere jumped by 15 parts per billion in 2020 and 18 parts per billion in 2021.

Scientists are studying whether the unusually large increases in atmospheric methane levels in 2020 and 2021 are the result of a "climate feedback" from nature-based sources such as tropical wetlands and rice paddies, or whether they are the result of human-made natural gas and industrial leakage. Or both.

Methane emitted by fossil sources has more of the carbon-13 isotope than that produced from wetlands or cattle.

"The isotope data suggest it's biological rather than fossil methane from gas leaks. It could be from agriculture," Jackson said. He warned that "it could even be the start of a dangerous warming-induced acceleration in methane emissions from wetlands and other natural systems we've been worrying about for decades."

The WMO said that as the planet gets warmer, organic material decomposes faster. If the organic material decomposes in water — without oxygen — this leads to methane emissions. This process could feed on itself; if tropical wetlands become wetter and warmer, more emissions are possible.

"Will warming feed warming in tropical wetlands?" Jackson asked. "We don't know yet."

Antoine Halff, chief analyst and co-founder of the firm Kayrros, which does extensive analysis of satellite data, said that "we're not seeing any increase" in methane generated by fossil sources. He said some countries, such as Australia, had cut emissions while others, such as Algeria, had worsened.

Atmospheric levels of the other two main greenhouse gases — carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide — also reached record highs in 2021, the WMO study said: "The increase in carbon dioxide levels from 2020 to 2021 was larger than the average annual growth rate over the last decade."

Carbon dioxide concentrations in 2021 were 415.7 parts per million (or ppm), methane at 1908 parts per billion (ppb) and nitrous oxide at 334.5 ppb. These values represented 149 percent, 262 percent and 124 percent of preindustrial levels, respectively.

The report “underlined, once again, the enormous challenge — and the vital necessity — of urgent action to cut greenhouse gas emissions and prevent global temperatures rising even further in the future,” WMO Secretary General Petteri Taalas said.

Like others, Taalas has urged the pursuit of inexpensive techniques for capturing the short-lived methane, especially when it comes to natural gas. Because of its relatively short life span, methane’s “impact on climate is reversible,” he said.

“The needed changes are economically affordable and technically possible. Time is running out,” he said.

The WMO also pointed to the warming of oceans and land as well as the atmosphere. “Of the total emissions from human activities during the 2011-2020 period, about 48 percent accumulated in the atmosphere, 26 percent in the ocean and 29 percent on land,” the report said.

The WMO report comes shortly before the COP27 climate conference in Egypt next month. Last year, in the run-up to the climate conference in Glasgow, Scotland, the United States and European Union took the lead in promoting the Global Methane Pledge, which set a goal of reaching a 30 percent reduction in the atmosphere by 2030. They estimated that could shave 0.2 degrees Celsius off the rise in temperatures that would otherwise take place. So far, 122 countries have signed up for the pledge.

White House climate negotiator John F. Kerry said that in the U.S.-China joint declaration issued in Glasgow, China vowed to release “an ambitious plan” for this year’s climate summit that would move to cut its methane pollution. So far, however, that has not happened and China still has not issued an up-to-date “nationally determined contribution,” or NDC, in the lingo of the United Nations.

“We look forward to an updated 2030 NDC from China that accelerates CO2 reductions and addresses all greenhouse gases,” Kerry said.

“To keep this goal alive, national governments need to strengthen their climate action plans now and implement them in the next eight years,” he said.

Yet the United States is also among the vast majority of nations that have not updated their NDCs this year, something that all countries promised to do when the Glasgow summit ended one year ago.

Just 24 countries have submitted new pledges in the past 12 months — and few of the updated commitments represent a meaningful improvement over their past promises, the U.N. report found. Australia made the most significant changes in its national climate goal, which previously hadn’t been updated since the Paris agreement was signed in 2015.

Altogether, the combined 193 climate pledges made since Paris would increase emissions by 10.6 percent by 2030, compared with 2010 levels. This reflects a slight improvement over last year’s assessment, which found that countries were on a path to increase emissions by 13.7 percent by 2030, compared with 2010 levels, the United Nations said.

But nations must reduce their carbon outputs to about 45 percent of their 2010 levels to avoid warming beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) — a threshold at which scientists say humanity can avoid the most catastrophic effects of climate change.

Just under half of countries have also submitted long-term plans for bringing their emissions down to zero. If these countries make good on their promises, the U.N. report found, global emissions in the middle of the century could be 64 percent lower than they are now. Scientists say these cuts could keep

	<p>temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), bringing humanity somewhat closer to tolerable warming levels.</p> <p>“But it is really not clear if countries will actually pull this off,” warned Joeri Rogelj, a climate scientist at Imperial College London who specializes in global warming pathways.</p> <p>There are huge discrepancies between nations’ near-term climate pledges and their long-term plans, he noted. For most countries, the emissions trajectories implied by their NDCs would make it almost impossible to achieve a net-zero target by the middle of the century.</p> <p>The U.N. findings underscore a simple sobering fact, Andersen said: In waiting so long to act on climate change, humanity has denied itself a chance to make a slow and orderly transition to a safer and more sustainable future. Countries must constantly bolster their ambitions, rather than make modest carbon-cutting pledges that get updated every five years. No nation can rest easy until every country has eliminated planet-warming emissions and restored natural systems that can pull carbon out of the atmosphere, she said.</p> <p>“We need to see more and faster,” she said. “Today you stretch and tomorrow you stretch and the day after you stretch.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Alarm: mystery deaths humpback whales
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/oct/26/pacific-northwest-humpback-whale-death-alarm
GIST	<p>The nearly 32ft hulking frame of a male humpback whale was found splayed on sands near California’s Fort Bragg on Saturday – the fourth whale to wash ashore along the coasts of Mendocino this year.</p> <p>A day later, a young female humpback would also be found dead far north near Vancouver Island. She was known to scientists as “Spike”, after being first documented in 2018.</p> <p>The whale deaths have sparked alarm among members of the public, as experts work to study the carcasses and determine how and why the giant migratory mammals wound up on these beaches. Though each death is a tragedy, they offer important clues and insight that enable scientists to better understand ocean conditions and rising risks.</p> <p>As important components of the ocean ecosystem with ranges that extend thousands of miles, whales are often seen as indicators of ocean health. Unnatural deaths can serve as signals that something is amiss. Trauma from ship strikes is also often to blame for whale deaths.</p> <p>But the mysteries aren’t always easy to solve, and the whale’s necropsy will take time.</p> <p>As concerned onlookers gathered around the beach-bound body north of Pudding Creek Beach in California on Sunday, researchers and volunteers got to work collecting samples to determine its cause of death. Skin and blubber samples were taken, along with the whale’s pelvic bones, which will be taken to the California Academy of Sciences, and parts of the baleen, the sieve-like strands that enable whales to strain and filter their food.</p> <p>“Nothing obvious points to ship strike at this time,” Sarah Grimes of the Noyo Center for Marine Science told the Mendocino Voice, even after a laceration was observed on the whale’s right side. Scientists will continue examining the carcass for broken bones and bruising.</p> <p>Collisions with ships are a growing problem for whales, and they are among the top causes of death for the endangered creatures, who traverse the waters frequented by large cargo vessels.</p> <p>“When ships travel quickly through these areas, there is a high risk of collision, injury and death, as whales are often unable to get out of the ship’s path in time,” the World Wildlife Federation says in an</p>

informational page on the issue. The rising toll even caused [ecologists to liken them to ocean “roadkill”](#) in a study published in 2019.

Hundreds of miles to the north, scientists were also working to interpret injuries on Spike’s body to analyze evidence of what might have killed the beloved whale. She had no apparent external injuries. Photos show her anchored in shallow water, distended from decay.

“We do not know what caused her death,” experts with the Marine Education and Research Society (Mers) [said in a post on Instagram](#), but added that “it will not be a surprise if it is found that she died from blunt force trauma resulting from being hit by a boat”.

The organization said that the images of Spike were shared to tell locals that action was under way and to also educate the public on whales and what to do when they wash ashore. “The tragedy might lead to more awareness, from who to call, to whatever conclusions can be made about the cause of her death,” the marine research society said. The investigation is being conducted by Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

Spike, named after a character in the animated classic *The Land Before Time*, had a dinosaur-like marking on her left side. She had been identified by Mers researchers, who track individual whales in the region to boost understanding of the awe-inspiring giants and encourage conservation.

“We get to feel the depths of emotion that result from knowing these whales as individuals,” Jackie Hildering, a Mers researcher, told Canada’s National Observer. But beyond the loss, she added, the important find will help engender interest from the public. Many whales who perish and sink into the depths won’t have their stories told.

“It’s important that people care about whales as individuals because that helps us evolve in understanding how our actions impact them as representatives of the ecosystem,” Hildering said. “Spike is an ambassador for her kind.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/27 Megalopolis: coastal West Africa
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/27/megalopolis-how-coastal-west-africa-will-shape-the-coming-century
GIST	<p>It has long been said that no one knows with any certainty the population of Lagos, Nigeria. When I spent time there a decade ago, the United Nations conservatively put the number at 11.5 million, but other estimates ranged as high as 18 million. The one thing everyone agreed was that Lagos was growing very fast. The population was already 40 times bigger than it had been in 1960, when Nigeria gained independence. One local demographer told me that 5,000 people were migrating to Lagos every day, mostly from the Nigerian countryside. Since then, the city has continued to swell. By 2035, the UN projects that Lagos will be home to 24.5 million people.</p> <p>What is happening in Lagos is happening across the continent. Today, Africa has 1.4 billion people. By the middle of the century, experts such as Edward Paice, author of Youthquake: Why Africa’s Demography Should Matter to the World, believe that this number will have almost doubled. By the end of this century, the UN projects that Africa, which had less than one-tenth of the world’s population in 1950, will be home to 3.9 billion people, or 40% of humanity.</p> <p>These are staggering numbers, but they do not tell the full story. We need to zoom in closer. It is in cities where most of this astounding demographic growth will occur. Once we begin to think along these lines, what is at stake becomes even clearer. Much western commentary on Africa’s population growth has been alarmist and somewhat parochial, focusing on what this means for migration to Europe. The question of how African nations manage the fastest urbanisation in human history will certainly affect how many millions of its people seek to stay or leave. A recent continental survey by a South African foundation, for example, found that 73% of young Nigerians expressed an interest in emigrating within the next three years. But given its scale, this is a story with far larger implications</p>

than population movements alone, shaping everything from global economic prosperity to the future of the African nation state and the prospects for limiting climate crisis.

There is one place above all that should be seen as the centre of this urban transformation. It is a stretch of coastal west Africa that begins in the west with Abidjan, the economic capital of Ivory Coast, and extends 600 miles east – passing through the countries of Ghana, Togo and Benin – before finally arriving at Lagos. Recently, this has come to be seen by many experts as the world's most rapidly urbanising region, a "megapolis" in the making – that is, a large and densely clustered group of metropolitan centres. When its population surpassed 10 million people in the 1950s, the [New York metropolitan area](#) became the anchor of one of the first urban zones to be described this way – a region of almost continuous dense habitation that stretches 400 miles from Washington DC to Boston. Other regions, such as Japan's Tokyo-Osaka corridor, soon gained the same distinction, and were later joined by other gigantic clusters in India, China and Europe.

But the Abidjan-Lagos stretch now stands to become the granddaddy of them all. In just over a decade from now, its major cities will contain 40 million people. Abidjan, with [8.3 million people](#), will be almost as large as New York City is today. The story of the region's small cities is equally dramatic. They are either becoming major urban centres in their own right, or – as with places like Oyo in Nigeria, Takoradi in Ghana, and Bingerville in Ivory Coast – they are gradually being absorbed by bigger cities. Meanwhile, newborn cities are popping into existence in settings that were all but barren a generation ago. When one includes these sorts of places, the projected population for this coastal zone will reach 51 million people by 2035, roughly as many people as the north-eastern corridor of the US counted when it first came to be considered a megapolis.

But unlike that American super-region, whose population long ago plateaued, this part of west [Africa](#) will keep growing. By 2100, the Lagos-Abidjan stretch is projected to be the largest zone of continuous, dense habitation on earth, with something in the order of half a billion people.

"I have worked in China and in India, and that is where most of the attention on cities has been until fairly recently, but Africa is unquestionably the continent that will drive the future of urbanisation. And it is that strip along the coast of west Africa where the biggest changes are coming," said [Daniel Hoornweg](#), a scholar of urbanisation at Ontario Tech University. "If it can develop efficiently, the region will become more than the sum of its parts – and the parts themselves are quite big. But if it develops badly, a tremendous amount of economic potential will be lost, and in the worst of cases, all hell could break loose."

The first time I travelled along this stretch of coast was in the late 1970s, on a long road trip to Nigeria from [Ivory Coast](#), where my family then lived. My father, who ran a 20-country healthcare training programme for the World Health Organization, had a meeting to attend in Lagos, and he decided to invite my brothers and me along for the ride. At the time I was a first-year college student in the US, but it was the summer holidays, and I was excited to jump aboard a clattering old-school grey Land Rover for the trip.

He followed a route traced out on a well-worn, foldable Michelin map. It did not take long to discover that many of the routes marked on the map in red – supposedly signifying national or international highways – were little more than two-lane asphalt roads, some of which had long ago been chewed to oblivion by heavy trucking traffic, or eroded by years of seasonal rains. The secondary or tertiary roads, traced more faintly in yellow and white, signalled far greater challenges: jarring dirt paths that were more like trails than highways. These would leave our bodies aching and caked with dust. For long stretches, the west African countryside was so empty that we had to carry our own fuel in jerry cans.

One unfortunate artefact of this region's imperial history is that, while the British and French built roads and railways to transport agricultural commodities and minerals from the hinterlands of their colonies to modern ports – where they could be shipped home for great profit – in their intense imperial rivalry, they did little to connect their respective possessions. But by 1992, when I took another long drive along

this coast, a stretch of highway had been built on either side of the frontier between Ivory Coast and Ghana circumventing a coastal lagoon, and relegating the old picturesque but chancy border-crossing ferry to quaint memory. Back then, few could have imagined the full scope of the changes coming to this stretch of coast – though, in retrospect, some of the signs were already clear.

As late as 1980, Lagos had still seemed like a series of modest towns barely stitched together by its highways and bridges. By the early 90s, though, it had exploded in size, and was already choking on itself. It had become notorious for some of the world's worst traffic jams, known locally as go-slows. Abidjan, the region's second-largest city, had also begun to morph. Its suburbs were expanding, thrusting toward the border with Ghana to the east. The other national capitals of this region – Accra in Ghana, Lomé in Togo and Cotonou in [Benin](#) – were likewise starting to mushroom.

But it was on more recent trips, in the 2010s, that I saw the urban revolution transforming west Africa coming into full view. By then, Ivory Coast had laid down a true highway all the way from Abidjan to its border with Ghana. Abidjan had gobbled up early colonial capitals like Bingerville and the postcard-pretty but long-stagnant beach town of Grand-Bassam, turning them into dormitory communities. The roadside scenery during a drive from border to border along the Ghanaian coast bore no resemblance to the lightly peopled landscapes of earlier decades. Towns and cities were strung together one after another along nearly the entire route. For long stretches, one scarcely ever left an urban environment. As always in this region, Lagos is where the most dramatic changes are visible. As it swells, the city is shooting thick urban tendrils west toward the border with Benin – the slender, francophone nation of 12 million people next door – rendering much of that country's economy a satellite not so much of [Nigeria](#), but of Lagos itself. (If Lagos state were an independent country, its economy would rank as the fourth-biggest in Africa.)

Led by Lagos, as coastal west Africa's urbanisation gathers pace, and populations and regional commerce begin to surge across old imperial borders, the lives of tens of millions of people along the coastal corridor are changing in ways that neither colonial designs nor six decades of independent government seem to have remotely anticipated.

Earlier this year, I returned to the coast, this time not for one long road trip, but for a series of shorter forays by car in Ghana, Togo and Benin. Everywhere I went, the speed and scale of the historic transformations under way were evident. In Ghana, I visited a place I had encountered on previous trips, Takoradi, and its conjoined twin, the railroad town of Sekondi. In 1980, the two towns together counted 197,000 people. This year, their population surpassed a threshold that only [14 American cities](#) have ever reached: 1 million people, a more than five-fold increase in little more than a generation.

On the July morning I returned to Takoradi, it was the Islamic holiday of Eid al-Adha, or Tabaski, and the narrow downtown streets were packed with young celebrants from the local Muslim minority, all dressed colourfully in flowing laced robes. When the centre of Takoradi was built, more than a century ago, the city was Ghana's lone port. It was here that Kwame Nkrumah famously returned by ship from England in 1947, emerging from obscurity to lead his country, then a British colony known as the Gold Coast, to independence 10 years later. In their fading pastel and dreary grey tones, the verandaed buildings of the old downtown looked like the set of a period drama. Just beyond here, though, the antiquated scene gave way to an enormous construction site, where a highway flyover was rising above dusty streets. Once complete, it will allow traffic to bypass the old, outgrown centre in favour of the much larger modern periphery, where most of the city's people now live.

At Takoradi's western edge, I stopped at a new shopping mall where, on the shelves of a busy supermarket, I found South African wines, Swiss chocolates, cellophane packs of the same brand of fresh blueberries I eat every day in New York, and – an even more surefire sign of disposable income – expensive canned dog food. There were also Portuguese and Chinese restaurants, a beauty salon, mobile phone shops and a bridal gown dealer doing brisk business.

It is not immediately obvious where the income necessary to sustain this kind of commercial strip comes from. Some surely derives from work in the offshore oil business based nearby, some from a recently expanded regional port, some from a combination of old-line cocoa farming and new jobs in tech. And this points to the reality of what makes this megaregion so distinctive from earlier ones. Since at least the 18th century, as the writings of Hegel and Hume show, Africa has been widely regarded in the west as if it existed outside the flow of history – scarcely a participant in the global present, and even less relevant to the future. This has never been true, but those who cling on to such misapprehensions would do well to visit this stretch of coastline. In Lagos, Accra, Abidjan, or even in much smaller places like Takoradi, meanwhile, globalised enclaves with strong links to the rich world jostle with expanses of ragged urbanity, half hopefully striving, half congealed in poverty.

On another morning, I drove from the heart of Ghana's capital, Accra, to the city of Kasoa, less than 20 miles away. Kasoa is sometimes touted as one of the fastest-growing conurbations on the continent. When I made my first trips along this coast in the 70s, it was little more than a shambling collection of rural roadside traders' stalls. In 1984, Kasoa had 3,000 people. Scarcely a decade ago, its population was just shy of 70,000. Now it is home to roughly half a million people, equal to Edinburgh or Tucson. The view from an overpass above Kasoa on the coastal highway is a reminder that cities throughout Africa have tended to sprawl outwards, rather than upward. There is little high-rise housing here, and few tall buildings of any kind. From up high, Kasoa has a rough-hewn, unfinished look. The newborn city lurches outward from the highway junction in all directions, its roads jammed with traffic. For many experts, this is a problematic feature of much of west Africa's urbanisation: it is almost entirely unplanned.

Kasoa's streets are frenzied with jumbles of wooden stalls and incessant trading of all kinds. In the dusty byways beyond the highway, young people were everywhere: hawking sachets of cold water, running after cars to sell mobile phone credits and cheap plastic toys, crying out the prices of sweet, puffy bread or plantain chips from beneath beach umbrellas on street corners.

Most noticeable of all were the schoolchildren walking the streets in their uniforms and backpacks. By 2050, about 40% of all the people under 18 in the world [will be](#) African, a proportion that will reach half by century's end. On the streets of Kasoa, statistics like these come to life. Everywhere there were billboards for daycare centres, kindergartens and "international schools". The only real competition for school ads came from church ads, which offer promises of success in this world as much as in the next. Most of the people who fill the streets of places like Kasoa are recent arrivals from the countryside, and live in ramshackle cinderblock dwellings. Julius Ackatiah, a 55-year-old, recently set himself up in business here after many years in Italy, where he had already realised the African dream of emigration, legally acquiring a new nationality in a rich European country. I met him as he peered out from the unfussy sidestreet storefront where he sells secondhand housewares he has shipped from Italy.

Why had he chosen Kasoa, I asked him? Accra has recently become overbuilt and too expensive, Ackatiah said, but Kasoa was on the rise. "There are lots of people here, and they are trying to set up new homes for themselves and make new lives in this town. That makes for good business." As Ackatiah spoke on the stairs of his shop, he was engulfed by his used-goods stock in trade: cheap plastic chairs, living room couches and tables, computer monitors and household appliances, small and large, from refrigerators and microwaves to laundry irons.

One of the biggest challenges for Africa's emerging megaregions remains its weak transport networks. In 2018, more than 40 nations agreed to create the African Continental Free Trade Area, an arrangement that economists say could boost African GDP by \$450bn by 2035, mostly thanks to increased intra-African commerce. Since then, another 10 countries have joined, including Nigeria, making for a truly continent-wide agreement. "At its crux, outside the World Trade Organization, it is the biggest region of free trade in the world," said Astrid Haas, a Ugandan independent economist based in Kampala. "What it is intended to do is unlock the benefits on the continental scale for African countries to be able to trade with each other; to eliminate both tariff and non-tariff barriers."

But realising its full potential will require much more intense cooperation between neighbours, and especially on improving physical infrastructure. Algiers and Cairo remain the only African cities with underground commuter lines. (In recent years, inspired citizen designers have carefully sketched out potential subway networks for cities such as Kigali and Port Harcourt, but these remain hopeful ideas for now.) Abidjan and Lagos are building surface light urban rail systems, but both are small-scale and behind schedule. Meanwhile, the lack of decent roads continues to hold this region back. The four-lane highway between Accra and Ksoa aside, almost the entire 600-mile stretch of coast consists of an undivided two-lane road that passes slowly through small towns and villages. Drivers sometimes find themselves having to dodge daring pedestrians and errant animals.

Then there are the predatory police and soldiers who stop drivers in order to extort money under the pretext of traffic safety checks or the fight against crime. Last summer, on the outskirts of Takoradi, I was waved down by a portly, peanut-chewing police officer who asked, as if it was the most normal thing in the world: “What have you brought for me?” West African travellers face holdups like this, smiling or not, on a daily basis. On a trip in Ghana in the 90s, when I travelled 340 miles from the northern town of Bolgatanga to the central city of Kumasi, I counted 72 roadblocks. If anything, international borders in the region have long been even worse hotspots for this kind of predation.

Yet there is some reason for optimism. In May, the African Development Bank announced it had raised \$15.6bn to fund the construction of a new coastal highway from Lagos to Abidjan. “We are talking about something like the road between Baltimore and New York – a toll road,” said Lydie Ehouman, a transportation economist at the bank, who told me the target for completion of the highway, which will be four to six lanes wide throughout, is 2026. “It will be free-flowing, with a chip in your licence plate so you don’t need to stop at toll gates. It will be a modern highway.” Economists at the African Development Bank argue that the [West African Highway](#), as the new road will be called, will increase cross-border trade among the participating countries by 36%.

“If people are confident in the availability of reliable, rapid transportation, other things will begin to change dramatically, too,” said Hoornweg, the Ontario Tech professor. “Property values will rise sharply along the major transportation axes, and that will encourage people to build upward, with highrises, rather than building out with more and more sprawl. The cities will also become much more efficient and environmentally friendly, and that makes their development more sustainable.”

On the ground today, a vision like this isn’t so easily conjured. It’s true that in Lagos a collection of impressive modern highrises is slowly taking shape. And in downtown Accra, a dazzling new real estate scheme – high-end apartment towers, office buildings, fancy shopping plazas, luxury hotels – is planned for the waterfront. But such projects are catering to the needs of the already wealthy, and not to the growing millions of people in the region who will soon urgently need housing. Here, the contrast with China, where huge clusters of residential high-rises ring every large city, could not be more striking. Rather than avatars of the future, in fact, the easiest thing to conclude from projects like these is that the region’s governments are setting their sights far too low to address the sweeping demographic and social changes on their way. This may even be true about the coastal highway system.

“The best thing that could happen to west Africa would be if someone could convince these countries to seriously consider the experience of Asia,” said Alain Bertaud, a senior fellow at the Marron Institute at New York University. As a former World Bank official who specialises in urbanisation, Bertaud advised China about developing one of the world’s most successful megaregions, in the Pearl River delta. “Density itself does not create prosperity,” Bertaud told me. “You will have to have lots more transportation, including new rail lines, new roads that link the coastal highway to the hinterlands and to small cities, where the cheaper land is.” He pointed out that this requires a lot of building across national borders, which is not easy in any part of the world. “In India, we have seen that even building a corridor that crosses several states within the same country is difficult. In Africa they will need much better coordination.”

Haas, the Ugandan economist, agreed. “Africa faces a need for \$20-25 billion annually in infrastructure investment, plus \$20bn more each year for housing. Trying to convey the scale here is very hard. We are talking about ballooning numbers, and people need to be shocked into action.”

Toward the end of my trip, I took a three-hour drive from Accra to the border with [Togo](#). As we drove, Accra soon gave way to a grimy industrial zone that stretched for miles. From here all the way to the border, about 120 miles, the landscape was filled with peri-urban sprawl, its most distinctive feature being the ubiquitous roadside schools where children played sports or milled about.

At the border, as soon as I climbed out of my car I was surrounded by touts eager to sell me taxi rides, exchange currency for me or help expedite my visa and vaccination checks. I proceeded alone, expecting complications, but was pleasantly surprised at how straightforward the procedures were on both sides of the border. My first question to the driver I hired on the Togolese side was how far it was to the capital, Lomé. He laughed. “You’re already in Lomé,” he said. “In 15 minutes, you will be at your hotel.”

The next day, a Sunday, I drove 30 minutes east from Lomé to a small town with Royce Wells, a 30-year-old American IT professional who wanted to inspect the progress on a beachside house he is building. Togo is an unusually narrow country – wedged between Ghana and Benin, it runs about 430 miles north to south, but has only 31 miles of coastline. For this reason, local elites and foreign investors alike have long dreamed of building it into a kind of entrepot trading state that profits from various kinds of arbitrage, from sharp currency fluctuations in Nigeria and Ghana to varying levels of corruption and political risk among its neighbours.

Togo maintains a democratic facade through regular elections, but has been tightly controlled by one family since 1963. In contrast to Nigeria, though, the electricity works, the internet is fast, and everyday life is not plagued by insecurity. With its commercial future in mind, Togo has built a port with capacity much larger than its domestic needs, and also produces cement, steel and other industrial and consumer goods for its larger neighbours. On this basis, Wells sees the country as a good bet, and hopes to make money building hotels there. “The places that learn how to create the right tax incentives and legal protections [for investors] will basically be able to arbitrage on Lagos and its dysfunction,” he told me.

Others are much more sceptical that this vision will ever be realised. After all, it relies on canny decision-making at the top of government. Bright Simons, a prominent Ghanaian political analyst and entrepreneur, called this five-nation megaregion “one of the most administratively broken landscapes on the planet”. Its governments are “unbelievably un-strategic”, he said. “I am always puzzled by the enthusiasm of elites for creating chambers of commerce with Mexico, or some other distant country, rather than with their own neighbours.”

Here, the needs of west Africa’s booming population collide with the stubborn realities of the nation state, and specifically with contrasting colonial histories. Ivory Coast, Benin and Togo are former French colonies, and Nigeria and Ghana were colonised by Britain. This has left different official languages in place, whether English or French, as well as a currency in the French-speaking states, the CFA franc, that is a relic of colonisation – it was once tied to the French franc and is now attached to the euro. Perhaps the most important imperial legacy, though, is the insular national elites who, because of colonial history and the near-checkerboard way the countries alternate between English and French, pay scarce heed to each other. A Nigerian I met in Accra, for example, told me: “It wasn’t until I started spending time in Ghana recently that I realised Ghana isn’t our neighbour. Benin sits next to us, followed by Togo.”

Cotonou, the capital of Benin, lies 20 miles from the border of Nigeria, and 76 miles from Lagos, but there is no immediate sense of the behemoth next door. The city of 700,000 (on its way to 5 million by 2100) clusters around a small and tidy administrative centre, complete with a modernist presidential palace built largely in glass, whose large size belies the diminutive nature of Benin itself, the corridor’s second-smallest state. With its low-rise buildings and heavy scooter traffic, much of Cotonou feels

	<p>scarcely different from a big town or village. Whether Benin likes it or not, Lagos's accelerating expansion seems destined to one day swamp this place.</p> <p>When I asked a longtime acquaintance, a successful businessman from Benin, whether people in his country, including its leaders, sustain close relations with Nigeria, the answer was no. "The elite here still flatters itself with talk about being the Latin Quarter of the region, due to our French chauvinism," he said, referring to the pre-independence era when France made Benin a regional centre of colonial education. "Our leaders are very poor at thinking ahead ... If you tell the president he has nice shoes, he'll be swimming in happiness. With Nigeri a next door, what we should have done long ago is make English a compulsory second language in school, but no one has ever thought of that."</p> <p>This kind of pessimism, built upon a scornful assessment of governance at the national level in west Africa, is widespread. "We are going to need to have a functioning Ghanaian state, functioning states in Benin and Togo, and at least a minimally functional Nigerian government all at the same time in order to make this hugely urbanised future livable," said E Gyimah-Boadi, the 70-year-old co-founder and former CEO of the Ghana Center for Democratic Development, a thinktank.</p> <p>"Part of me wants to believe that the youth of west Africa can be their own saviours, and that it is not because of the failures of my generation that they are necessarily doomed. The nation state has been a huge curse. It worked very well for some of us, but we have left very little behind for the young. Basically, we have cheated them."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Pierce Co. deputies wrangle up alligator
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/pierce-county-deputies-animal-control-wrangle-up-alligator-stored-in-shipping-container
GIST	<p>LAKEBAY, Wash. - Pierce County deputies and animal control seized an alligator from a shipping container in Lakebay last week.</p> <p>According to the sheriff's department, animal control had a prior complaint about a person on a property who had an alligator. When deputies responded to the property they couldn't find the reptile.</p> <p>On Oct. 20, animal control stopped by the property and found the alligator stored in a small tub inside a shipping container.</p> <p>Deputies said they also found sick calf and a mattress belonging to the 32-year-old owner to sleep in the container with the animals.</p> <p>Animal control returned to the property the next day with a warrant and wrangled up the alligator and to check up on the sick calf. But the owner and the calf were not on the property.</p> <p>The animal was placed into animal control's vehicle and taken to the Tacoma Humane Society, where a wildlife rehabilitation sanctuary met with them to take custody of the reptile.</p> <p>"It is illegal to possess alligators in the State of Washington and this gator was also not in a great environment," deputies said.</p> <p>The alligator was in good health and will be placed in a larger habitat.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Group helps find missing dogs in King Co.
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/facebook-find-missing-dogs-king-county/281-37395f14-5237-478f-b9c9-9a2dc99e0a14

GIST	<p>KING COUNTY, Wash. — A Facebook group dedicated to reuniting lost dogs with their owners is making an impact in King County, with help from its nearly 34,000 members.</p> <p>"I'll do everything possible so they'll never go missing," Facebook group moderator Lily Burns said. She said she hopes the same goes for other dogs throughout King County.</p> <p>Burns was with her favorite girls, her two dogs, at a park in Redmond on Wednesday.</p> <p>"I mean, these are my babies and I hope that most of the people that post on the page, feel the same about their dogs," said Burns.</p> <p>The Facebook group, Lost Dogs of King County was started back in 2014 by James Branson, the founder of Useless Bay Sanctuary, a non-profit that specializes in finding lost dogs.</p> <p>Burns said with Branson's vast knowledge on rescuing pets, the group wanted to spread their knowledge to the community with tips on preventing dogs from getting lost.</p> <p>Tips include having your dog wear a martingale collar and ID tag, using two leashes for high risk dogs, taking a lot of pictures of your dog to potentially post if they get lost, getting a microchip implanted in your dog among other preventative measures.</p> <p>The group also has tips on what to do if a dog is currently lost. Some of those tips include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlist help • Print fliers • Mark the rear window of a car • Ask the neighbors • Create large neon posters • Check the shelters • Consider an automated calling service • Use Calming Signal • Try using a friendly dog as a lure • Use a wildlife camera • Set a trap <p>Burns has been a moderator of the group since 2019 and has made a real impact, monitoring the page nearly 100 hours per week.</p> <p>"Lost Dog in King County helps reunite approximately 10,000 dogs a year and we have people from all over King County, sometimes outside of King County posting on our page asking for help," she said.</p> <p>Burns doesn't want to take all the credit. She is adamant that it's a team effort and is grateful for Branson for creating the group and the other moderators on the page as well as the nearly 34,000 members that have help reunite families.</p> <p>Despite the success, Burns is still working to find those dogs that are still trying to get back home.</p> <p>"I still have hope that those dogs are going to make it home, and I help keep the post active and if that day were to come, I will cry so many tears," Burns said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/27 More human remains found Lake Mead
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/26/us/lake-mead-human-remains-diver-discovery-callville/index.html
GIST	After a diver found what appeared to be a human bone in Lake Mead, the park searched the area and uncovered more human remains , the National Park Service confirmed Wednesday.

The diver, who is a private business operator at the Lake Mead National Recreation Area, found the bone in the Callville Bay area of Lake Mead on October 17, according to park spokesperson Stefani Dawn. The next day, a park dive team searched the area and “confirmed the finding of human skeletal remains,” Dawn said.

The finding marks at least the sixth time human remains have been uncovered at the lake this year, many due to the lake’s dropping water levels from prolonged drought. Some of the discoveries have only been partial sets, so it is unclear how many people’s remains have been found.

The Clark County Coroner’s Office, which is handling the remains found this year, previously told CNN that medical examiners were still working to determine whether the partial sets were from separate people.

It is unclear if the bone found on October 17 and the remains found on October 18 belong to the same person.

“At this time, no foul play is suspected,” Dawn said. “The Clark County coroner’s office has been contacted to confirm the identity of the deceased.”

As a decades-long drought parches the American West, Lake Mead’s [water supply has suffered](#), causing the man made reservoir’s shorelines to dramatically recede and reveal some remains that were once submerged.

The first discovery came on May 1, when a set of remains was [found in a corroded barrel](#) with an obvious gunshot wound, Lt. Jason Johansson of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police homicide unit [told CNN](#) in August.

Investigators quickly determined the body belongs to a homicide victim who died in the mid-’70s to early ’80s. Medical examiners have been trying to identify the person through DNA analysis, though the advanced decomposition of the remains makes identification challenging, according to Clark County Coroner Melanie Rouse.

Within a week of the homicide victim’s remains being found, another set was discovered in the Callville Bay area. Medical examiners have since identified the remains as those of [42-year-old Thomas Erndt](#), who is believed to have drowned in the lake in 2002.

Four more discoveries were made in the months that followed, including at least two sets of partial remains in the park’s popular Boulder Beach area.

Dropping water levels have also uncovered relics including [sunken boats](#), a [World War II-era landing craft](#) and [ancient volcanic rock](#).

[Return to Top](#)

Crime, Criminals

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	10/26 Renton organized retail theft: 12 arrests
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/12-people-arrested-in-renton-organized-retail-theft-bust
GIST	<p>RENTON, Wash. - A dozen people were arrested in Renton last week as part of an organized retail theft sting at two major stores.</p> <p>Members of the Special Enforcement Team (SET) and Patrol Operations Unit with Renton Police partnered with loss prevention personnel at the Target and Lowe's in Renton. The Target is located in The Landing and the Lowe's is just outside The Landing shopping complex on Garden Ave. N.</p>

	<p>In just a six-hour period, the operation resulted in the arrest of 12 people and led to the recovery of thousands of dollars worth of merchandise.</p> <p>"SET will continue to partner with area retailers in an attempt to prevent the on-going problem of organized retail theft in our City," Renton Police said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 WA 13,000 former inmates eligible to vote
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/politics/formerly-incarcerated-people-washington-vote-for-first-time/281-3120f95e-df8d-409e-a56c-10d880257e8d
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON, USA — The November midterm elections are less than two weeks away and for thousands of people in Washington, it's the first time they are eligible to vote under a new law that restored voting rights to formerly incarcerated people.</p> <p>"I was actually incarcerated at 17," said Cyril Walrond.</p> <p>Walrond spent 17 years in prison and was released on Aug. 1 at the age of 34.</p> <p>"The very next day to register to vote and to vote in the primary, really gave me a sense of connectivity within my community, where I realized that it's not just talking and having all these different opinions, but really, I'm making my voice and my vote count," Walrond said.</p> <p>Walrond worked toward that day, even while inside prison. He worked with organizations like the Voting Rights Restoration Coalition.</p> <p>"We have an opportunity to make sure that our voices are heard and that we are doing the things that are necessary to make sure all of our lives are being represented. That's what true equity looks like," Walrond said.</p> <p>Under the new law that went into effect in January of this year, it automatically restores voting rights to people who have been released from prison after committing felonies, even if they are on parole. That means thousands will get the chance to vote for the first time this November.</p> <p>"The shift is that we're moving away from the kind of forever labeling people that have past convictions, and treating folks as outcasts for the rest of our lives or their lives, to welcoming people home, when they get released," said Christopher Poulos, Director for Person-Centered Services at the Department of Corrections.</p> <p>Poulos knows how that feels. He served three years in federal prison in Pennsylvania, a state where inmates could vote. However, Poulos' ballot came a day too late, but that's when his interest in voting restoration for people with convictions started.</p> <p>Poulos said the ability to vote helps make people feel a part of the community and reduces recidivism. "When people do really feel included, the chances are that they're going to act the same way and act positively in our communities," he said.</p> <p>Poulos said under the new law, 13,000 more people across the state are eligible to vote.</p> <p>A moment Walrond doesn't take for granted.</p> <p>"Just feeling so empowered in that moment, and hoping that others who are also system impacted are able to feel empowered by the opportunity of voting as well," said Walrond.</p> <p>Walrond is also a member of the Black Prisoners Caucus, the Outreach and Advocacy Manager for the University Beyond Bars, and works with the Washington Voting Rights Restoration Community. On</p>

	<p>Tuesday, he was working to give back in his community by helping make sure others know they are eligible to vote at the R.I.S.E Center of Hilltop.</p> <p>“It feels amazing. It feels like a redemption story in every sense of the word, knowing where I’ve been, and knowing how far I’ve come, but knowing that I’ve been blessed with community and loved ones around me to help me on this journey,” Walrond said.</p> <p>The Department of Corrections is working with the Secretary of State’s Office and The Washington Voting Rights Restoration to get the word out about the new law.</p> <p>Walrond is also working on getting those in jail who are currently awaiting their trial registered to vote and has done so for 91 people in Pierce County Jail so far, with plans to help those in King County Jail.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Officials: 11 WA drug traffickers charged
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/eleven-people-from-wa-charged-with-trafficking-meth-fentanyl/ https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/fbi-dea-seize-over-300k-fentanyl-pills-over-1k-pounds-meth-wa-ca/GKBIX3COF5BQTPG43ZIREGQRUM/
GIST	<p>Seventeen people in Washington and California have been charged in a federal indictment with trafficking in methamphetamine, fentanyl and heroin brought into the U.S. from Mexico, the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Western District of Washington said Wednesday.</p> <p>Eleven of the suspects, including seven from Washington, were arrested Tuesday during a series of searches while six were arrested in September, the U.S. Attorney’s Office said in a news release.</p> <p>Tuesday’s arrests involved searches of 14 locations in Washington and California, which turned up more than 2 two kilos of fentanyl, 4.5 kilos of heroin, 10 pounds of methamphetamine and 67 firearms, according to the release.</p> <p>“These individuals were bringing large loads of meth, heroin, fentanyl and cocaine from Mexico across the border and up I-5 to the Pacific Northwest,” said Seattle-based U.S. Attorney Nick Brown.</p> <p>Those arrested were involved in what federal officials called three interconnected drug-trafficking groups, which have trafficked over 1,000 pounds of methamphetamine and hundreds of thousands of fentanyl pills, the office said in a statement. Before Tuesday’s searches authorities had already seized 43 firearms, ammunition and more than \$1 million in cash, the statement said.</p> <p>The September arrests came after authorities served a search warrant following a wiretap investigation into a group allegedly led by Agustin Gutierrez Valencia, 32, of Kent, according to an indictment. Despite those arrests, the U.S. Attorney’s Office says the drug operation continued.</p> <p>“Even when an RV loaded with drugs was pulled off the highway and seized by law enforcement, they weren’t deterred,” Brown said in the statement. “The wiretap revealed various organizations continued to recruit drivers and vehicles to transport their drugs throughout our District.”</p> <p>The 11 people arrested Tuesday include Glauco Guardado Rodriguez, 25, of Seattle; Miguel Thomas, 33, of Tukwila; Tad Fulton, 48, of Seattle; Ryan Holmquist, 34, of Issaquah; Timothy Hursh, 38, of SeaTac; Ryan Terry, 44, of Duvall; and Abel Cruz, 32, of Des Moines.</p> <p>Six other people indicted in September include four Washingtonians, including Gutierrez Valencia, who is accused of being a leader of a regional drug-trafficking organization, which is believed to have gotten narcotics from the Los Angeles area and redistributed them in the Seattle area.</p> <p>Mexican drug-trafficking organizations grew in the late 1980s into their current size and scope after U.S. government agencies broke up Caribbean networks then used by Colombian cartels, according to</p>

the [Council on Foreign Relations](#). Drug-trafficking groups in Mexico dominate the import and distribution of several drugs, including fentanyl, into the U.S. and officials have made little progress in reducing the demand.

Eleven people were arrested in Washington and California on Tuesday, in connection to three drug trafficking groups responsible for trafficking more than 1,000 pounds of methamphetamine and 330,000 fentanyl pills.

The two indictments charge 11 people after a search and seizure of 14 locations in Washington and California, where two kilos of fentanyl, 4.5 kilos of heroin, ten pounds of methamphetamine and 67 firearms were seized. Law enforcement also seized high-capacity magazines, thousands of rounds of ammunition, two sets of body armor and a ballistic shield.

In September, law enforcement also seized 1,016 pounds of meth, 9 kilos of fentanyl powder, 330,000 fentanyl pills, 25 kilos of cocaine and 15.5 kilos of heroin.

Six additional people were arrested and indicted in September.

“These individuals were bringing large loads of meth, heroin, fentanyl and cocaine from Mexico across the border and up I-5 to the Pacific Northwest,” said U.S. Attorney Brown. “Even when an RV loaded with drugs was pulled off the highway and seized by law enforcement, they weren’t deterred. The wiretap revealed various organizations continued to recruit drivers and vehicles to transport their drugs throughout our District.”

Law enforcement also seized 43 guns and more than \$1 million in cash.

“Dangerous people are filling our streets with guns and drugs — and people are dying,” said Seattle Police Chief Adrian Z. Diaz. “The entire SPD, including its officers and investigators, have made getting firearms and illegal narcotics off our streets a top priority. We know this monthslong investigation, arrests, and seizures will result in lives saved. With more than 350,000 fentanyl pills taken by SPD’s narcotics unit alone this year and shootings in Seattle up 29% in 2022, we thank our local and federal partners for their help in prioritizing this lifesaving work.”

Those named in the indictments unsealed Tuesday include:

- Jose Paleo, 29, of La Mirada, California
- Octavio Guzman, 24, of Huntington Park, California
- Glauco Guardado Rodriguez, 25, of Seattle
- Araceli Salas, 30, of Maywood, California
- Maria Rangel Aguilar, 44, of Huntington Park, California
- Miguel Thomas, 33, of Tukwila, Washington
- Tad Fulton, 48, of Seattle
- Ryan Holmquist, 34, of Issaquah, Washington
- Timothy Hursh, 38, of SeaTac, Washington
- Ryan Terry, 44, of Duval, Washington
- Abel Cruz, 32, of Des Moines, Washington

Six people were also arrested on Sept. 21, 2022:

- Agustin Gutierrez Valencia, 32, of Kent, Washington
- Daniel Vazquez Arroyo, 32, of Kent, Washington
- Rosalio Reynoso Arellano, 51, of Los Angeles
- Ernesto Casillas, 46, of Los Angeles
- Benigno Hernandez aka Ivan Santos Arellano, 32, of Kent, Washington
- Jesus Toledo Pardo, 56, of SeaTac, Washington

Two additional people were arrested on criminal complaints Tuesday:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luis Valenzuela-Haro, 32, of Seattle • Michael Kinzel, 37, of Renton, Washington <p>The investigations were a part of an operation that included the FBI, DEA, Seattle police, Customs and Border Protection, High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area and Homeland Security.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Guilty: man drove SUV into parade killed 6
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/26/wisconsin-man-convicted-of-killing-6-with-suv-in-c/
GIST	<p>MADISON, Wis. — A Wisconsin man was convicted Wednesday of killing six people when he drove his SUV through a Christmas parade last year, ending a trial in which he defended himself erratically and sometimes confrontationally.</p> <p>The jury found Darrell Brooks guilty of six counts of first-degree intentional homicide. He faces a mandatory life sentence on each count.</p> <p>The jury got the case Tuesday and deliberated for a total of 3 hours and 15 minutes into Wednesday morning before announcing they had reached a verdict.</p> <p>Brooks drove his Ford Escape into the Christmas parade in Waukesha in suburban Milwaukee on Nov. 21 moments after fleeing a domestic disturbance with his ex-girlfriend, prosecutors said.</p> <p>Six people were killed, including 8-year-old Jackson Sparks, who was marching in the parade with his baseball team, and three members of the Dancing Grannies, a group of grandmothers that dances in parades. Dozens of other people were hurt, some severely.</p> <p>Brooks pleaded not guilty by reason of mental disease this year but withdrew the plea before his trial began with no explanation. Days before the trial started, he dismissed his public defenders, electing to represent himself.</p> <p>District Attorney Susan Opper called to the stand police officers and paradegoers who testified they saw Brooks behind the wheel of the SUV.</p> <p>Brooks struggled to mount a defense, launching into meandering cross-examinations, refusing to recognize his own name or the court's jurisdiction over him and muttering under his breath that the trial wasn't fair.</p> <p>He got into such intense arguments with Judge Jennifer Dorow that several times during the lead-up to jury selection she moved him into another courtroom where he could watch the proceedings via video and she could mute his microphone when he became disruptive.</p> <p>Opper told jurors during her closing arguments Tuesday that Brooks' refusal to stop once he entered the parade route shows he intended to kill people.</p> <p>Dorow allowed Brooks back into the main courtroom to deliver his closing to jurors face to face. In a rambling, repetitive speech, he tried to raise doubts about whether the SUV's throttle malfunctioned and whether the driver simply panicked. He lamented how he hasn't been able to see his children since he was arrested and insisted he's not a murderer.</p> <p>Opper countered during her rebuttal that a Wisconsin State Patrol vehicle inspector testified earlier that the SUV was in good working order. She warned jurors that Brooks was just trying to play on their sympathy.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Mexico missing students case falls apart
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/26/world/americas/mexico-iguana-missing-kidnapped-students.html

MEXICO CITY — The Mexican president said his government had finally solved the mystery behind the haunting disappearance of 43 students, one of the worst human rights abuses in the country's recent history.

In August, the government [unveiled a truth commission report](#) saying that after being abducted in 2014, the students were killed by drug traffickers working with the police and the military. A slew of arrest warrants followed.

But since then, the case has unraveled. Arrest warrants for military suspects were revoked. The lead prosecutor resigned. And now, the backbone of the government's explosive new report is in question.

In an interview with The New York Times, the head of the truth commission said that much of what it presented as crucial new evidence could not be verified as real.

"There's a percentage, a very important percentage, that is invalidated," said the official, Alejandro Encinas.

The extraordinary admission — along with a review of government documents, a previously undisclosed recording and interviews with several people involved in the inquiry — points to how the government's rush to deliver answers resulted in a series of missteps: a truth commission that relied on unsubstantiated evidence and a criminal investigation that botched the prosecution of key suspects.

Pressure came from the very top: Mexico's president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, announced in June that his government knew what happened to the missing students and would put the matter to rest this year, even though investigators hadn't yet nailed down the proof.

But problems also stemmed from dysfunction within his administration, where officials investigating the abduction withheld key information from one another, undermining their own case.

Instead of a political victory, a campaign promise to finally close an open wound in the country has become a liability for the president, as families of the missing students have slammed the government for failing to deliver truth or justice.

"They needed to do something impeccable, but they didn't," said Santiago Aguirre, the primary lawyer representing the families. "It ends up looking a lot like what happened before, finishing up without verifying, more out of politics than out of conviction of having the truth clarified."

On the night they vanished in September 2014, the students, in keeping with a tradition that was largely tolerated by local bus companies, had commandeered a number of buses to drive to a demonstration in Mexico City commemorating a 1968 student massacre.

But the students were intercepted by gunmen, including municipal police officers, who forced them off the buses, shot some of them and took the rest away. After that, little is known about what happened.

The government of President Enrique Peña Nieto fumbled its investigation, producing a version of events it called "the historical truth" that blamed drug traffickers and local police officers, and was disputed by international investigators. Even as evidence emerged linking federal security forces to the abduction, most of the students were never found.

For Mr. López Obrador, the case carried special significance.

The victims — students at a rural teachers college in Ayotzinapa, a poor community in southern Mexico — were at the core of his base of support. The deeply flawed investigation under Mr. Peña Nieto fed a broader wave of discontent with the political establishment in Mexico, which favored the outsider candidacy of Mr. López Obrador and helped sweep him into power in 2018.

As president, Mr. López Obrador's first executive order created a truth commission to investigate the disappearance. To lead the inquiry, he appointed Mr. Encinas, a longtime friend and former senator.

Families of the students were brought to the national palace for regular meetings, and felt that finally they were being taken seriously. The government opened a separate criminal investigation, helmed by a widely respected special prosecutor, Omar Gómez Trejo. The remains of two students were identified.

But after three years passed without much else in the way of groundbreaking developments, Mr. López Obrador began to grow anxious.

"The president asked me, 'What happened? Release the information,'" Mr. Encinas said in an interview, later adding: "We have two years left in the government, we have to show results, and the attorney general's office has to prosecute."

So in February, Mr. Encinas scrambled for answers: He flew to Israel to meet alone with [Tomás Zerón de Lucio](#), a former Mexican official accused of deliberately compromising the previous administration's investigation into the abduction.

Mr. Zerón, the former director of Mexico's equivalent of the F.B.I. [who now lives in Israel and is applying for asylum there](#), has been charged with torturing witnesses and planting evidence. In January, Mexico submitted to Israel an extradition request for Mr. Zerón.

A month later, during a nearly three-hour lunch in Tel Aviv, Mr. Encinas pleaded with Mr. Zerón for information about the students' remains that he may have withheld while in power — offering the "president's support" in exchange for his cooperation, according to a recording of the conversation reviewed by The Times.

"Help me unravel all of this," Mr. Encinas told Mr. Zerón during the meeting. "I'm promising you the president's support."

Any doubts Mr. Zerón raised about beating his case were batted away.

"The president doesn't care about putting anyone in jail," Mr. Encinas told the former Mexican official, who faces up to 60 years in prison.

"To sit down with the man who has been identified as the mastermind in the cover-up of what happened, it seems like a desperate measure," said Kate Doyle, a senior analyst at the National Security Archive, a Washington-based research institute, and an expert on the disappearance. "The government is obviously scrambling to gather whatever information it can to be able to say that it has solved the case."

In an interview with The Times, Mr. Encinas said he was trying to persuade Mr. Zerón to cooperate because he believed he had valuable information and that he was only promising Mr. López Obrador's support for a plea deal.

Liora Turlevsky, Mr. Zerón's lawyer said the meeting shows "that the accusations against my client are a serious blood libel and a witch hunt that was conducted due to internal political interests." Mr. Zerón, she said, denies all accusations against him and is not withholding any information connected to the case.

A spokesman for the president did not respond to requests for comment.

The trip to Israel yielded no new information. But two months later, in April, Mr. Encinas finally got what seemed to be a big break: a trove of WhatsApp messages purportedly sent in 2014 by criminals, members of the military and other officials previously implicated in the abduction.

The messages appeared to lay out in gruesome detail how and where drug traffickers disposed of the students' bodies, according to an unredacted copy of the government's report reviewed by The Times.

The messages also suggested, for the first time according to experts in the case, that a senior military officer was directly involved in the disappearance of six of the students.

Then in June, Mr. López Obrador announced that the government had figured out what happened to the missing students. “The Ayotzinapa matter will be done this year,” Mr. López Obrador said.

In the weeks that followed, officials rushed to fulfill that promise, making decisions that directly undercut their own investigation — in part because people working side by side on the case did not fully trust one another.

The messages, shared with Mr. Encinas by a single source as a series of 467 screen captures, were cross referenced with other pieces of evidence. But Mr. Encinas did not share them with the attorney general’s office, even though, he said, those officials could have done a forensic analysis to verify the messages’ authenticity.

Mr. Encinas withheld the messages because he worried they would be leaked, he said, and he felt an obligation to present “a timely” report to the students’ families.

A similar sense of urgency had taken hold in the attorney general’s office.

As Mr. Encinas was getting ready to unveil his findings in August, the attorney general, Alejandro Gertz Manero, pushed his lead prosecutor to prepare an arrest warrant for the former attorney general, who became the face of the previous administration’s sham investigation, according to several people familiar with the matter who spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals.

The lead prosecutor, Mr. Gómez Trejo, begged for more time to gather additional evidence against the former attorney general but was overruled, the people said. Prosecutors with little experience on the case then took it over, and the former attorney general was arrested.

But the case against him was later suspended by a judge who openly admonished the new prosecutors for shoddy work.

Then, weeks after angering leaders of the armed forces by requesting arrest warrants for military officers, prosecutors reversed course and asked a judge to cancel more than a dozen of them, citing, among other issues, “deficient evidence” in their own case. Mr. Gertz Manero’s office also launched an internal audit of the case compiled by Mr. Gómez Trejo, who resigned after being sidelined.

Four military officers, including a general, [remain in custody and are awaiting trial](#).

The truth commission was also in trouble. Almost as soon as Mr. Encinas published his report, the WhatsApp messages became a focus of scrutiny. A team of international investigators who have been following the case for years pointed out that the messages’ tone differed from what they had seen in other intercepted communications.

After questions about the messages surfaced publicly, Mr. Encinas subjected them to a more thorough review. He said that he had been unable to verify many of the screenshots, and has had to scrap some of them.

“There are some we’ve had to discard,” he said. “They don’t have enough elements to be confirmed.” Mr. Encinas conceded that the source who provided the messages could have fabricated them. “Anything is possible,” he said, “There is no 100 percent guarantee.”

The international investigators are expected to publish their own analysis of the messages later this month. “We are doing that verification for the parents,” said Ángela Buitrago, one of the investigators.

	Mr. Encinas said that even if the messages turned out to be fake, he still had confidence in his investigation, which he said was backed up by other evidence and was “solid and getting even stronger.”
	“Every investigation,” Mr. Encinas said, “has its successes and its errors.”
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 School shooter left note: ‘perfect storm’
SOURCE	https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/st-louis-school-gunman-left-note-describing-lonely-life-perfect-storm-for-mass-shooting/article_607b33cc-2402-55a7-94c9-f0c2214bec5c.html
GIST	<p>ST. LOUIS — The gunman who killed a student and a teacher at a south St. Louis high school before police killed him Monday had about 600 rounds of ammunition inside the school and left behind handwritten notes about being a loner with no social life, which he called the "perfect storm" for a mass shooting, authorities said Tuesday.</p> <p>Interim St. Louis police Chief Michael Sack read a passage to reporters Tuesday from a notebook he said belonged to 19-year-old gunman Orlando D. Harris. Harris left the notebook in the car he drove to Central Visual and Performing Arts High School.</p> <p>“I don’t have any friends, I don’t have any family,” it read. “I’ve never had a girlfriend. I’ve never had a social life. I’ve been an isolated loner my entire life. This was the perfect storm for a mass shooter.”</p> <p>Harris, a former student at the high school, had been working part time as a food services worker at Cardinal Ritter Senior Services since 2019, according to a representative from the Archdiocese of St. Louis.</p> <p>Harris broke into the high school through a side door at about 9 a.m. Monday armed with an AR-15-style rifle. Police shot and killed him on the building’s third floor, near the library, 14 minutes after police received the first call for an “active shooter.”</p> <p>The school is at Arsenal Street and South Kingshighway near Tower Grove Park. The teacher who died was 61-year-old Jean Kuczka, who taught health and physical education. Kuczka, a mother of five, lived in the Dittmer area of Jefferson County. The student who died was sophomore Alexzandria Bell, 15.</p> <p>Four other students were shot and injured — two in the leg, one in the arm, and one in the hands and jaw. Two more students suffered abrasions, and a girl fractured her ankle.</p> <p>Police haven’t said if they believe Harris targeted any of his victims. One survivor heard him say he was “tired of everybody” in the school. His gun jammed at least once, a student told the Post-Dispatch.</p> <p>It is still unclear where Harris got the gun.</p> <p>One teacher on Tuesday remembered Harris as friendly and outgoing, with teachers as well as his fellow students.</p> <p>“He would laugh and joke with members of his graduating class,” said Lauren Ogundipe, the school’s theater director and teacher of theater arts. “He would talk with different teachers, he would talk about his school life — he didn’t really talk about his home life. He would talk about girls he was interested in.”</p> <p>Harris worked backstage in theater productions, stage managing and handling lighting and sound for plays and other arts performances, she said.</p> <p>“He was helpful. He showed himself as a helpful servant of the school. If something was needed, a skill he’d obtained in the arts, he showed himself as ready, willing and able to lend a hand,” she said.</p> <p>“If something needed to be moved physically ... he would show up on his own without being asked.”</p>

Along with his interest in the arts, he was also competitive at playing online video games, she said.

The victims

Alexzandria Bell was a bright and charismatic student who majored in dance at the performing arts magnet school, said CVPA Principal Kacy Seals-Shahid. She also attended SLPS' performing arts middle school Carr Lane.

She was a serious but popular student with a supportive family, Seals-Shahid said.

Alexzandria had asthma, which made the rigorous dance program challenging at times. Once, Alexzandria forgot her glasses and didn't know her mother rushed them to the school before the bus arrived. Seals-Shahid was there to greet her with the glasses as she got off the bus, delighting Alexzandria.

At the school's recent homecoming dance, Alexzandria looked beautiful in her dress, Seals-Shahid said. The principal said she remembers joking with the girl, saying "(you) look just like me."

Seals-Shahid, who has been principal at the school for eight years, said Kuczka, the woman killed in the shooting, was the only teacher who never complained about anything.

She was devoted to her students, Seals-Shahid said, commuting more than 40 miles each day from Jefferson County. While she taught health and physical education at Central, she was also the cross-country coach at Collegiate.

Jean Kuczka

Kuczka launched her career teaching swimming lessons as a student at Lindbergh High, according to her school bio.

"I love teaching health and physical education and guiding students to make wise decisions," the bio reads.

Briefing

At a morning news briefing Tuesday, Chief Sack spoke along with Mayor Tishaura O. Jones and two officials with the St. Louis Public Schools. The briefing lasted about 15 minutes.

The building has metal detectors, but the side door was not equipped with metal detectors. Glass was shattered on the door's bottom panel Monday. The door has paper signs on the inside, warning people "Do not open this door for anyone" and "You are on video."

The school had seven security officers on duty Monday. The officers are not armed, said DeAndre Davis, director of safety and security for St. Louis Public Schools.

Asked if the school's safety officers should carry firearms, Davis said, "For some people that would cause a stir of some sort. But for us, we thought it's best for our officers for the normalcy of school for kids to not have officers armed in the school."

City leaders several times since Monday's shooting have complimented the quick response by officers. They didn't hesitate to storm the building and confront the gunman, and those actions saved lives, authorities said.

Throngs of officers arrived four minutes after receiving the call for an active shooter. The officers confronted the shooter eight minutes after arriving and they reported the suspect down two minutes later. Some of the police officers, both on- and off-duty, arrived quickly because they had been attending a funeral nearby for a colleague.

Sack, Davis and the mayor also credited active shooter training.

	<p>Harris had seven magazines of ammunition on a chest rig, a form of tactical gear that he wore. He also had an additional eight magazines of ammunition in a field bag that he had carried, Sack said.</p> <p>“This doesn’t include the number of magazines that he left, and dumped on the stairway, in the corridors along the way,” the chief said. “It appears he came into the building with more than 600 rounds of ammunition.”</p> <p>The chief said, “It doesn’t take long to burn through a magazine as you’re looking down a long corridor, or up or down a stairwell, or into a classroom.”</p> <p>Sack urged people to speak up if they notice someone who appears to be suffering from a mental illness or distress and talks about buying firearms or causing harm.</p> <p>Harris lived in the 7000 block of Pennsylvania Avenue in south St. Louis. The home was searched by local police and federal agents Monday. No one answered at the home early Tuesday. He did not have a criminal record, police said. Sack said he had no information about a possible juvenile record because that information is off limits to police.</p> <p>A spokesperson for the archdiocese said Cardinal Ritter Senior Services is providing spiritual and grief counseling resources to staff and residents in the wake of the shooting. They also promised to cooperate with police during the investigation.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/26 Family tried take gun from school shooter
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/st-louis-school-target-teen-suspect-police/story?id=92136030
GIST	<p>The family of the 19-year-old suspect accused of opening fire in a St. Louis, Missouri, high school had recently removed the firearm used in the deadly school shooting from their home, but the teen somehow got ahold of it again, authorities said Wednesday.</p> <p>One student and one teacher were killed in the Monday morning shooting at Central Visual and Performing Arts High School. Several others were injured.</p> <p>The suspect, Orlando Harris, who police said was armed with an AR-15-style rifle and more than 600 rounds of ammunition when he "forced entry" into the building, died during an exchange of gunfire, according to St. Louis Police Commissioner Michael Sack.</p> <p>Sack told reporters during a news conference Wednesday that the family had previously contacted the department about a firearm discovered in the home.</p> <p>On Oct. 15, police responded to a domestic disturbance at Harris' home because the "suspect's mother had located a firearm in the home and wanted it removed," St. Louis Sgt. Charles Wall said in an update Wednesday evening.</p> <p>Police determined that Harris legally possessed the gun, and a "third party known to the family" took the gun so it was no longer stored in the home, Wall said.</p> <p>"While it is not yet clear when or how the suspect came to be in possession of the firearm after this incident, we can confirm that the firearm involved in this incident is the firearm used in the shooting Monday," Wall said.</p> <p>Harris -- who graduated from the high school last year -- had been seeing mental health professionals, Sack said Wednesday, and his family had him committed on some occasions.</p> <p>Whenever Harris' family "noticed him, kind of, stepping out of line ... they always worked to try and get him back on his medication, back into therapy, whatever it is that he needed," Sack said.</p>

Return to Top	<p>The family -- who has been "fully cooperative" with police -- appears to have "done everything they could have possibly done" to help Harris, Sack said, "but sometimes that's not enough."</p> <p>Wall added that "this tragic incident occurred despite their best efforts."</p> <p>Harris "felt isolated and alone" and "there was a disconnect between him and what he felt was the school community," Sack said.</p> <p>The school "had always been the target," he said.</p> <p>Sack said Tuesday that Harris left behind a notebook with writings about his desire to "conduct this school shooting."</p> <p>According to Sack, Harris wrote: "I don't have any friends, I don't have any family, I've never had a girlfriend, I've never had a social life."</p> <p>Sack said Harris called himself an "isolated loner," which Harris called a "perfect storm for a mass shooter."</p> <p>Harris' family would search his room on occasion but the family was not aware of his notebook, Sack said. It's not yet clear when or how Harris bought the gun, Sack said.</p>
-------------------------------	---

Information From Online Communities and Unclassified Sources/InFOCUS is a situational awareness report published daily by the Washington State Fusion Center.

If you no longer wish to receive this report, please submit an email to intake@wsfc.wa.gov and enter UNSUBSCRIBE InFOCUS in the Subject line.

DISCLAIMER - the articles highlighted within InFOCUS is for informational purposes only and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Washington State Fusion Center, the City of Seattle, the Seattle Police Department or the Washington State Patrol and have been included only for ease of reference and academic purposes.

FAIR USE Notice All rights to these copyrighted items are reserved. Articles and graphics have been placed within for educational and discussion purposes only, in compliance with 'Fair Use' criteria established in Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976. The principle of 'Fair Use' was established as law by Section 107 of The Copyright Act of 1976. 'Fair Use' legally eliminates the need to obtain permission or pay royalties for the use of previously copyrighted materials if the purposes of display include 'criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, and research.' Section 107 establishes four criteria for determining whether the use of a work in any particular case qualifies as a 'fair use'. A work used does not necessarily have to satisfy all four criteria to qualify as an instance of 'fair use'. Rather, 'fair use' is determined by the overall extent to which the cited work does or does not substantially satisfy the criteria in their totality. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use,' you must obtain permission from the copyright owner. For more information go to: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml>>

THIS DOCUMENT MAY CONTAIN COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL. COPYING AND DISSEMINATION IS PROHIBITED WITHOUT PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNERS.

Source: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml>

